

→2016 BMW S1000XR SUPER ADV TOURER!

**HONDA
AFRICA
TWIN**

CYCLE WORLD

AMERICA'S LEADING MOTORCYCLE MAGAZINE

PROJECT 156

VICTORY'S
SPORTING
FUTURE?

↓ Team CW Races
This Pikes Peak
Prototype



PLUS:
FUN-FACTOR TEST: 7 BIKES!

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OCTOBER 2015
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THE 2015 GSX-S750

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SINCE 1962



PHOTO BY VVE ASSAD

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ON THE COVER
Victory prototype
Project 156.
Photo by
Ackerman + Gruber



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RISK

NOT BELIEVING IN THE POTENTIAL FOR SUCCESS IS THE GREATEST FAILURE

Massive props to the folks at Victory and Polaris who green-lighted Project 156. It was huge in scope, ridiculous in time line, and fraught with consequence.

Yet when Victory marketing folks Kyle Clack and Kevin Reilly walked into my office last December and asked if we'd like to go racing with a prototype V-twin engine, the Pikes Peak International Hill Climb was the natural choice. "And I've got the right guy in the next office..." referring, of course, to Don Canet, who'd finished third overall last year in his rookie attempt on a Ducati Multistrada.

And away we went.

I can't think of any other manufacturer who would undertake a project like this. But after Indian's time in the sun since the big relaunch, Victory is now shifting gears to "prove American performance." Which is why you see a Gunner in NHRA Pro Stock dragracing and also why Victory attacked Isle of Man with the ex-Brammo electric TT bike. And got third in the hands of Irish real-roads racer Lee Johnston.

But neither of those is quite like Project 156, which features a scratch-built Roland Sands Design frame and a prototype engine, and was not an existing bike that had been raced for years.

But, while any racing is a big risk for a manufacturer, the real risk and true consequence falls on the rider, who is alone on that mountain.

From the first time Don lapped me at Circuit de Catalunya in Spain in 1997 I've had mad respect for his riding ability. But watching him prep for and race Pikes has built it to a new dimension. Others agree.

I asked Pikes Peak veterans Paul and Becca Livingston, who kept the team effort together and made pit space and overall operations happen so smoothly, what they had observed working with Canet for two straight years. My favorite anecdote: "We'd look over and see Don kind of close his eyes," Paul said. "And

his hands and feet would start moving with all the motions of riding. He kept doing this, so we timed it. It turned out to be 10 minutes, about the same time as a run up the mountain."

That's the kind of focus and precision Don's always shown during the last 20 years I've been riding, essentially, a foot away from the guy.

I rode up Pikes Saturday before the race and was shocked at how sketchy the surface is and how light-headed the drop-offs make you feel at just 40 mph and on the correct side of the white paint line.

Which was why on race day when I heard over the radio, "Canet is down! Rider down!" it was so chilling.

It was a huge relief to hear that Don was quickly back in the saddle and ripping off a good section time despite his 22-mph tip-over. It made it even more crushing to hear the bike later quit just 2 miles from the finish.

The ups and downs were wonderful and bitter in succession. Up for the amazing start and a Section 1 time that was second fastest overall for a motorcycle. Down for the crash and worry that Don might be hurt, or worse. Up for him remounting and setting a Section 3 time *after he just picked up his bike* that was fifth-fastest on the day. Then down again when we heard the bike quit and he was stranded at roadside. There was no more hope. But there were some final ups: Don was not hurt, and the prototype racebike, Project 156, unlike anything Victory ever built, had made an amazing performance in the hands of an exceptionally talented, precise, and clear-thinking racer.

Did Not Finish beats Did Not Start anytime. My hat is off to Victory for throwing in so big but especially to Don for the total precision and professionalism he exhibited from concept to testing to showing up ready to race.

We are not done on that mountain.

MARK HOYER
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



THIS MONTH'S STATS



zero

NUMBER OF SPARE BIKES FOR PROJECT 156

1

OVERALL MOTORCYCLE WINNERS AT PIKES: JEFF TIGERT ON A HONDA CBR1000RR

400,000

NUMBER OF PEOPLE NOT IN STURGIS FOR PETER JONES' "RALLY OF ONE"



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Intake

KICKSTART THE CONVERSATION



Your August issue cover story features “Handbuilt” motorcycles. The article states, “Our sport’s future is right here.” What?! Have you guys been watching too many reruns of *American Chopper* and *Junkyard Wars*? Handbuilt? This article shows “garage engineering” at its best. Why do you people drool over these cobbled-together cartoonish and unrideable machines? Counterculture embracing counter-engineering. This is not the future but a fringe element of motorcycling. Didn’t you learn anything from the ’90s chopper craze? Save your printed space for real motorcycles, not the Hipster Art Fair.

DAVE ROGERS
CYCLEWORLD.COM

Dave, the artistry of these bikes is what has inspired great machines like the Ducati Scrambler and BMW R nineT. Yes, some of the Handbuilt Show’s bikes would be virtually unrideable, but the twin-engine Indian on the cover, for example, was built from nothing and holds two records at Bonneville. Real motorcycle.

NOT PIMPING

Excellent story and photos of the Handbuilt Show (August). It was so enjoyable to view actual and amazing creativity instead of the usual “pimped” Harleys. Amazing bikes. Wish I’d been there.

KEITH INGRAM
CLOVIS, NM

Mark Hoyer labeled the nice Honda pictured in *Up Front*’s “On a Wing” as “the first bike to wear ‘Gold Wing.’” Photo #31 from the Quail Gathering event gallery on your website shows Dick Hammer’s H-D CRTT/Aermacchi Ala d’Oro (Gold Wing) racer. Aermacchi offered the 175 and 250cc Gold Wing racers in 1961, much earlier than Honda’s 1975 model.

MICHAEL MOORE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

MOTO WHAT?

I enjoyed reading Peter Jones’ column in the August issue, but I have to point out that the Moto Guzzi V7 also has heron heads with the combustion chambers in the piston tops. Peter, if you want to see some Moto Morinis, check out the Italian Motorcycle Owners Club (IMOC) meet in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, every September. Plenty of Morinis, as well as other defunct Italian marques.

Excellent work.

RON SANTOS
WEST WARWICK, RI

Oh, I have not laughed hard enough to bring tears to my eyes in so many years. You get kind of jaded when you’re older.

Thanks for the laughs, Peter.

I tore out the page and saved it!

MARK AMABLE
CYCLEWORLD.COM

Peter, I read your bit on Moto Morini and being from the area of Pennsylvania you mention, I thought I might have some luck finding one. Sure enough, on craigslist.org there’s a 1978 Moto Morini with 6K miles on it near York. Only \$3,900. Do it!

ADAM HAMPTON
CYCLEWORLD.COM

Peter Jones replies: “Thanks?”

WALK A MILE FOR A CAMEL

“Questionable Camel”? I found mine to be a great-handling and good-looking bike that kickstarted easily. Perhaps not as cool as my 3 1/2 Sport with the gorgeous Grimeca front drum. Though Peter Jones and I haven’t met, I am an American and have owned two Moto Morinis (as well as a Guzzi Eldorado). Still have my Cagiva 650 Elephant, and that, my friends, is yet another lovely machine.

DR. E.F. SANDERS
CYCLEWORLD.COM

URINE SAMPLE, ANYONE?

For the love of God and all that is holy, please ask manufacturers to stop mounting Urine Specimen Cups to the top of our handlebars.

These egregious eyesores make me wretch. Not only are they visible in every image of the hot new Yamaha YZF-R1, but they ruin the centerfold (July on page 45). And to make matters worse, you feature one as a full page under the Service column (page 80).

Surely Kevin Cameron could write a doctoral thesis on why these ugly things are used. But I don’t care. And stop calling me Shirley...

JOHN LOCKWOOD
BLAIRSVILLE, GA



Comments? Suggestions? Criticisms?
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Ignition

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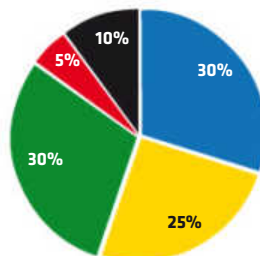
RR TOURING:

With the S1000RR's DNA and with the practicality and versatility of an upright ADV, the XR makes high performance comfortable.

BY THE NUMBERS

2.6

INCHES: is the difference between the available tall (33.7) seat and low seat/lowered suspension (31.1) option.



THE NEW BMW S1000XR MULTIPLE ATTRIBUTES:

- Sport
- Roadster
- Touring
- Enduro
- Urban

CW FIRST RIDE

2016 BMW S1000XR

Four-cylinder, upright, asphalt adventurer **By Blake Conner**



You might not realize it, but BMW's S1000XR is really the bike you need, even if you don't like the tall "quasi ADV meets *The Jetsons*" appearance. But after you ride it, you realize that it speaks to your emotions and fires up your adrenal glands with its high-performance engine and incredibly capable chassis, which has an upright and commanding seating position.

We had waited for months to ride this new adventure-tourer, whose engine has been plucked from one of the most significant sportbikes ever made: the S1000RR. In the S1000XR, the 999cc inline-four puts out a claimed 160 hp at 11,000 rpm versus 199 for the RR. The last S1000R roadster we tested on the dyno put out 150 hp and 77 pound-feet of torque at the rear wheel, so we expect the XR will be similar.

In standard form, the S1000XR has two ride modes: Road and Rain. Other standard fare includes Automatic Stability Control, with basic traction and wheelie control that work in conjunction with the more basic standard ABS. But if you tick the option box for Ride Modes Pro, TC is upgraded to the more sophisticated Dynamic Traction Control, while two additional ride modes are accessible including Dynamic and Dynamic Pro. The real difference here is the updated sensor box, which detects the bike's bank angle and applies TC accordingly.

My S1000XR tester was heavily optioned with Ride Modes Pro, D-ESA, and ABS Pro, plus Gear Shift Assistant

Pro, which allows clutchless upshifts and downshifts. After starting out in the Rain mode, it didn't take long for me to switch over to Road. On the wet tarmac, grip from the standard Bridgestone T30 sport-touring tires was quite good, and shutting off the DTC didn't even create too much drama.

With the majority of bikes in this category using two- or three-cylinder power, I thoroughly enjoyed this application of BMW's inline-four. The electronics allow the engine to be almost anything you want it to be—mellow and smooth or snappy and aggressive. The engine is totally tractable, with excellent bottom- to midrange grunt, capped off by excellent top-end. Fueling is well mapped, while the rider aids do their job without making themselves unwelcome. My only complaint about the engine? It tended to deliver a fair amount of vibration through the tall and wide handlebar at cruising speed, which could get old on a long ride.

The BMW chassis is anchored by an





VERTICALLY FLEXIBLE:

At 33.1 inches, the height of the standard saddle will not be for everyone, which is why there's an optional (at no charge) high seat that raises it to 33.7 inches or a low option that brings it down to 32.3. And when the lowered D-ESA option is combined with the Low seat, the S1000XR seat height drops all the way down to 31.1 inches.

aluminum frame and a dual-sided swingarm. Wheelbase, compared to the S1000R's, has grown by a significant 4.3 inches. At 61 inches, the XR wheelbase is just a tad shorter than the KTM 1190 Adventure's and a tad longer than the BMW GS's.

With wet roads the order of the day, I spent most of my time in the Road D-ESA setting and selected the single-rider preload setting. With our route encompassing a mixture of highway, country lanes, and back roads with lots of patches and broken pavement still being repaired from the winter, it was an ideal test for the suspension. If there is any single option package you should choose for the XR, make sure it includes D-ESA. In short, the system works as advertised, providing excellent damping in every riding condition.

As with BMW's "go" modes, you can also upgrade its "slow down" mode with ABS Pro. This bank-angle-sensitive ABS was first avail-

able as an option on the HP4 superbike, but for the first time it's now an option on a regular-production BMW. The system allows aggressive ABS to be applied even when the bike is leaned over, providing optimal braking in every condition. During the course of the day, I had a couple of opportunities to tax the ABS and was impressed.

After riding the XR hard and fast in a wide variety of conditions, I walked away with the sense that the 2016 BMW S1000XR is going to give the other players in this league a good run for their money. BMW has managed to build a bike that blends the excellent travel traits of the GS/A twins with the sportiness of the S series. It's one hell of a lot of fun, a practical and comfortable adventure-touring machine. *CW*



2016 BMW S1000XR

ENGINE TYPE

liquid-cooled inline-four

DISPLACEMENT

999cc

SEAT HEIGHT

33.1 in.

FUEL CAPACITY

5.2 gal.

CLAIMED WEIGHT

502 lb.

BASE PRICE

\$16,350

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CW FIRST RIDE

2016 BMW R1200RS

New boxer-powered sport-tourer goes high-tech **By Blake Conner**

BMW is convinced there is still a big market for traditional twin-cylinder sport-touring machines. Of course, considering it invented the class with the original 1973 R90S, it would feel that way. The brand-new 2016 R1200RS is the sportiest BMW to ever wear the RS badge. It even flirts with the performance territory once occupied by the HP2 Sport, the most athletic production boxer ever made.

Our press ride took place in Ontario, Canada, around Muskoka Lakes. Like the rest of the R line, the new RS gets the latest version of the air- and liquid-cooled 1,170cc DOHC twin. BMW claims 125 hp at 7,750 rpm and 92 pound-feet of

peak torque at 6,500.

On a riding route made up primarily of country lanes, a bit of highway, and some fast, flowing secondary roads, the RS felt right at home. Power from the twin feels good in this fairly lightweight application. Throttle response is good, and the engine's torque-rich nature invites you to pick a gear and just leave it there for long sections of road.

My RS was equipped with the Touring package, Keyless Ride, and GPS. Optional Gear Shift Assistant Pro made shifting pretty slick. In Road mode, power delivery is good, while Rain offers much tamer response. A quick downshift now and again to pass cars allowed excellent accel-



The hybrid analog/digital instrument cluster on the RS is easy to read and to navigate.

eration, but most of the time the boxer engine's torque allowed good roll-on performance without toeing the shifter.

The beauty of the new RS is its unflappable chassis and its diesel-like engine. This bike never tires of linking long sweepers together. A must-have option is the Dynamic-ESA suspension. Why suffer through the crappy part of your ride when a magic-carpet ride is just a button press away?

So for those looking for a traditional sport-touring machine, the boxer-powered RS is about as good as it gets. **CW**

2016 BMW R1200RS

ENGINE TYPE

air-/liquid-cooled boxer twin

DISPLACEMENT

1170cc

SEAT HEIGHT

32.3 in.

FUEL CAPACITY

4.7 gal.

DRY WEIGHT

519 lb.

BASE PRICE

\$14,950

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CW FIRST RIDE

2016 KTM 350 SX-F

All-new midsize four-stroke **By Brendan Lutes**



Manufacturers typically release a single all-new machine each year. But KTM isn't just any manufacturer. For 2016, the Austrian company has revamped the entire SX-F line with numerous improvements.

The 2016 KTM 250 SX-F and 450 SX-F machines are fine-tuned second-generation versions of the popular Factory Edition bikes that were released late in 2014. But the 350 SX-F is completely new, so we'll concentrate on that model here.

Chassis upgrades include a new frame that KTM says is 20-percent stiffer torsionally while having a steeper steering head angle and a shorter wheelbase for improved handling. Complementing the

frame is a shorter and lighter subframe, plus a revised swingarm with new flex characteristics. The WP 4CS fork carries over from the previous year but with revised settings. In the rear, the shock and linkage are new and designed to work more harmoniously with the chassis. KTM says these changes make the bike lighter and more compact, which improves handling.

And although the suspension on the 350 SX-F is very well balanced, we found ourselves yearning for it to be a little stiffer. A few clicker adjustments made us happier with the setup, but serious racers might consider a revalve.

Of the three new SX-F models, the 350 is the most fun to ride. Its

power is exactly what you would expect—smack dab in the middle of a 250 and 450. From bottom to top, power from the revised engine (more compact cases, revised combustion chambers and ports, plus new Keihin engine management with 44mm throttle body) is strong, yet it isn't too much to handle. If a little extra boost is needed, all it takes is a quick flick of the buttery smooth hydraulic clutch. If you do happen to kill it, no worries; it has flawless electric starting.

As has always been the case, the 350 SX-F has found that middle ground that makes the bike one of the most balanced and fun MXers available. **CW**

2016 KTM 350 SX-F

ENGINE TYPE

liquid-cooled single

DISPLACEMENT

350cc

SEAT HEIGHT

37.8 in.

FUEL CAPACITY

1.8 gal.

CLAIMED WET WEIGHT

224 lb.

PRICE



\$9099

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FIRST LOOK: 2016 HONDA CRF1000L AFRICA TWIN

New ADV has big shoes to fill **By Andrew Bornhop**

→ If you're like us, you lusted after the original Honda XRV750 Africa Twin, the early V-twin-powered ADV bike based on the NXR750 that won the Paris-Dakar Rally four times in the late 1980s. And now that we know a new Africa Twin—the Honda CRF1000L—arrives early next year, here's the question: Will this new Honda ADV have a similar legacy?

Hard to say. But one thing's for sure: This new Africa Twin, although late to the ADV party, looks well equipped to battle the likes of the BMW R1200GS and KTM 1190 Adventure. Housed in the double-cradle steel frame is a new 998cc parallel twin, a dual-plug SOHC engine that has four valves per cylinder, a 270-degree

crankshaft, and dual balance shafts. Power reaches the rear wheel via a conventional six-speed gearbox or a dual-clutch automatic, the latter fitted with three shift schedules and "incline detection," which delays upshifts when you're riding uphill and downshifts more quickly when you're headed downhill for earlier engine-braking.

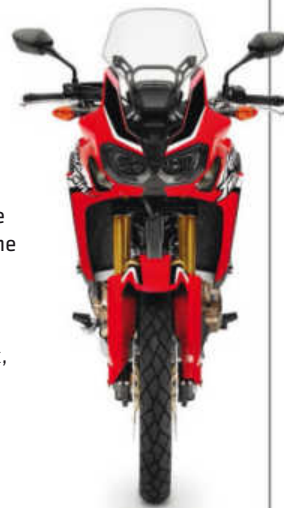
As for the long-travel Showa suspension, it features a fully adjustable inverted fork and a single-shock rear. Ground clearance is good, and the spoked wheels, a 21-incher in front and an 18-inch back, reflect the Africa Twin's need

to perform well on rugged dirt roads. Healthy Nissin four-pot disc brakes are on duty up front, and svelte bodywork looks like it will give the Africa Twin decent wind protection while keeping the bike narrow and perhaps less prone to off-road damage.

Seat height, not surprisingly, is a lofty 34.3 inches, but it can be lowered to 33.5. And the fuel tank, at 4.96 gallons, looks like it will offer good range between stops. For the record, Honda's claimed curb weight for the new Africa Twin is 503 pounds (534 for the DCT model), which is considerably lighter than the Yamaha Super Ténéré and compares favorably to the BMW R1200GS, which weighs a claimed 516 pounds.

Of note, the new Africa Twin is available with Honda Selectable Torque Control, an electronics package offering the rider three levels of control, and, most important, an ability to shut off ABS to the rear wheel. Problem is, ABS and HSTC are available only on the DCT/ABS model, not the base Africa Twin.

Player or pretender? Does DCT make sense on an ADV? We can't wait to find out. **CW**



SPECS

2016 HONDA CRF1000L

PRICE: N/A

ENGINE: SOHC parallel twin

DISPLACEMENT: 998cc

SEAT HEIGHT: 34.3 in.

FUEL CAPACITY: 4.96 gal.

CLAIMED CURB WEIGHT: 503 lb.



OCTOBER 1990



→ Forgive us, please, for the trendy Day-Glo colors that dotted our October 1990 issue—on the cover and in several layouts. Far more important, however, are the rare bikes that appeared on this cover: a Wankel-powered Norton F1 (“Norton’s Back!” Really?) and the 1991 Harley-Davidson Sturgis.

→ For our motocross audience, we gathered five of the top 250cc MXers and had them tweaked by local tuners such as White Brothers Cycle Specialties and Race Tech. Our winner of this “Special Forces” test? An especially potent

RM250 that was ported and had its suspension tweaked by SCR. “The faster the rider went,” we reported, “the more the bike liked it.”

→ Our annual Ten Best list had some expected winners (the Honda Gold Wing as the Best Tourer) and one big surprise: the Harley-Davidson FXRS-SP as the Best Standard. We tested this straightforward Harley against the likes of BMW’s K75 and the Honda Hawk GT and determined that it deserved the title for this simple reason: It delivered a “thumping good time every time it is ridden.”

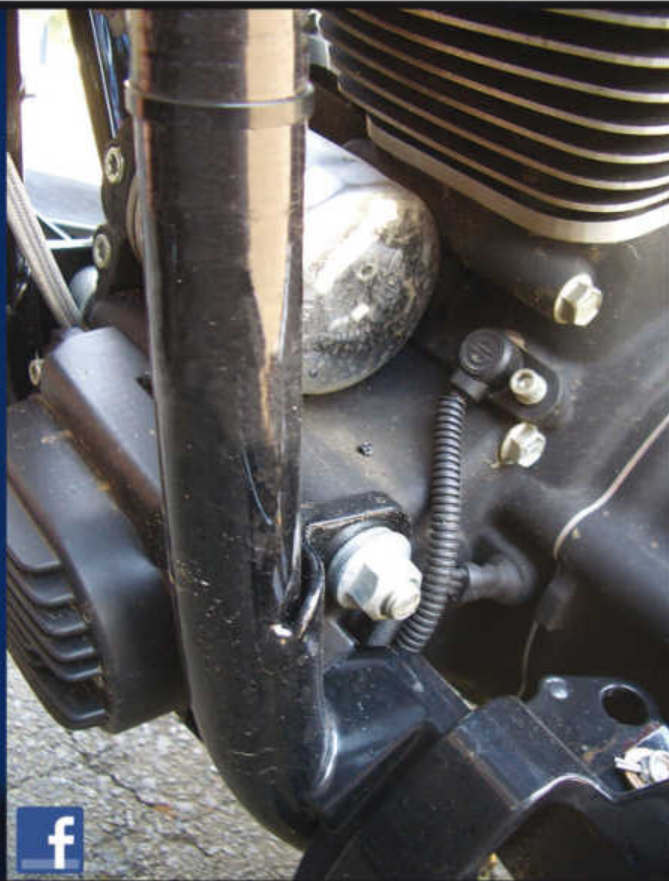
→ In this month’s *Race Watch*, we took a close look at racer Freddie Spencer. In “Fast Freddie Rides Again,” Camron Bussard documented Spencer’s accomplishments while deftly studying if the hugely talented American three-time world champion still had what it took to be a winner in 1990 and beyond. It concluded with Freddie making it very clear that he still wanted to race: “When I consider not racing, I only have to remember how I feel when I don’t. When you’ve done something your whole life, it becomes awfully important.” —Andrew Bornhop

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NEW IDEAS

MOTO MAGIC

Five new products from every corner of motorcycling
By Blake Conner



1

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2

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3

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ridetecxboots.com

4

BATWING GUARD

Do you live near a gravel company? Or maybe you just hate summer bugs messing up the paint on your Batwing-fairing-equipped Harley-Davidson. Either way, the **NoviStretch Harley-Davidson Fairing Mask** (\$109) is made from a synthetic stretch fabric with heavy-duty elastic trim that will protect the front of your bike. Attaches without fasteners.
novistretch.com

5

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TOP PRIORITY: STREET RIDING

PATIENCE, YOUNG GRASSHOPPER

Impatience and pushiness are traits to avoid when you're on two wheels **By Nick Ienatsch**



With this latest *Ride Craft*, I'm not trying to teach you a physical technique that can be mastered with correct practice.

Rather, I seek to drive home this simple but important message: Don't **push time**. This applies to all riders but particularly to riders who are always in a rush. You know who you are.

How can we avoid being at the wrong place at the wrong time? In the intersection when the drunk runs a red light in his Suburban. Next to the semi when its tire explodes. Or

behind the pickup truck when the ladder falls off. In each of these cases, five seconds earlier or later would have kept us safe.

Do your best to let time flow in a normal manner when on a motorcycle. No guarantees, you understand. You still might be in the wrong place at the wrong time. But the more I hang around this sport, the more I see impatience and pushiness being punished.

I'm talking about the rider who pushes everywhere, always tailgating, impatient, passing too closely, often

upset at other traffic, breaking laws due to the desire to "get going." The metronomic passing of time means nothing to this rider. He is always pushing, rushing, forcing.

I used to become impatient with a slow lunch waitress, or if I dropped my key under my bike, or if I had to wait for a fuel pump to open up. Not anymore. "Everything happens for a reason" is a great adage to recite when things don't go as quickly or efficiently as possible on a riding day. Let it happen. Let time beat along. This also means: Do things at a pace that allows you to remain calm, attentive, and aware.

An example: My brother Bill and I went for a ride up Angeles Crest Highway above Los Angeles in 2004. Bill is a long-distance trucker and rides conservatively at the speed limit. We got about 3 miles up the Crest and came up behind a dark-blue GMC Sonoma going about 3 mph slower than we were. If I were by myself, I would have passed the truck, but I knew my brother wasn't comfortable, so we just hung behind the truck and enjoyed the day. Cruising.

About a mile later, we came around a corner to find a car smashed against the right-hand guardrail and a minivan just coming to a stop sideways across the oncoming lane. They had hit head-on when the minivan wandered across the lane.

My brother—a successful professional driver—brought up the crash later that night. He knew I'd wanted to pass the Sonoma. He wondered where we would have been if we'd done it. So do I.

Riding can be a tough, unforgiving activity when things go wrong. We can work hard on our skills to master our surroundings. We can be mentally focused to better interpret our environment. We can spend money to perfect our ride.

And let's also do our best to not push the flow of time. **CW**



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GAS IN A BOX

FOR THE LOVE OF A FUEL TANK
BY PETER JONES

Some things are attractive; some things aren't. Although the difference between pretty and pretty ugly has at times impacted the course of history, we're often at a loss to name exactly why something is attractive and something else ain't. This applies to everything from art to buildings to music to cars to motorcycles. Well, and to people, too, but we're not going to talk about that.

I was reminded of this phenomenon while looking at new-for-2015 bikes. One bike had a harshly ugly fuel tank. Before the days of full-bodied motorcycles, we judged a bike's looks primarily by its fuel tank or by whatever shape there is where gas tanks are supposed to be. It's the core feature of a motorcycle, while all the other parts are merely limb-like, or something.

The fuel tank is pretty much the only item on a motorcycle that's shaped just for shape itself, with the forms of all the other features dictated by function; engines have to house components, frames need to hold specific engine layouts, seats have to fit under our butts, and so on.

The shapes of some fuel tanks are iconic. We don't just recognize them for what bike they identify. They speak of a time and a cultural moment of motorcycling. Take the Harley-Davidson Sportster peanut tank, for instance. It's perfect. According to Harley, it first appeared on the 1948 Model S, which was the rebranded DKW 125 single from Germany. Yes, an imported bit of significant chopper history. On its bike of manufacture, it was just a fuel tank, but on a V-twin chopper, it was a way of biker life, a bad attitude, a badge of rebellion. It was everything that H-D was for the 1960s and '70s, and it's still going strong.

Before I was into motorcycles, there

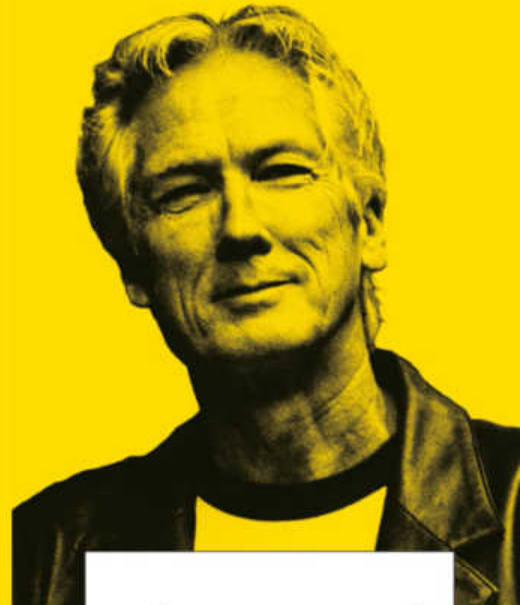
was a bike that kept grabbing my attention because of its fuel tank. It took a couple of years before I finally saw one while I was with a motorcycle enthusiast who could tell me what I was looking at: a mid-'70s Honda CB400F. At the time I knew nothing about bikes, didn't care about bikes, and had no dreams of owning one. But I knew that if I ever did get into motorcycles, that would be the bike I'd have to own, simply because of the beautiful shape of its fuel tank. Why its shape is so appealing, even to someone who might not care about motorcycles, I do not know.

So, yes, after I started caring about motorcycles I've owned a Honda CB400F or two. It's still a beautiful design.

Looking a bit further back in history, the Brough Superior SS100 has an unmistakable fuel tank of exceptional class and poise. Teardrop-shaped, rubber knee guards, twin caps—it's a work of art. If you disagree, you're wrong.

An iconic tank from Ducati was the "Imola" version of the mid-1970s 750 SS, so named for being on the bike that Paul Smart won that race with in 1972. It's a fiberglass tank with semi-see-through strips up each side that allow viewing of the fuel level. An oft-told story about a production version of this tank is that one of them included a fly that was stuck inside the window strip, though no human has ever come forth with a picture of it.

Today the shape of fuel tanks is lost on bikes with full bodywork, blending into the fairing. Such is the nature of streamlining, heat management, water-cooling, rider comfort, and wind protection. The great designer Massimo Tamburini foretold of this with his Ducati Paso, a bike whose tank cannot even exist without its surrounding bodywork. Something lost yet something gained. *CW*



BY THE NUMBERS



2.2

GALLONS OF FUEL
THAT FIT IN A HARLEY
FORTY-EIGHT

2.5

GALLONS OF FUEL THAT
FIT IN A SUZUKI DR-Z400



FIVE

NUMBER OF TIMES I'VE RUN
OUT OF GAS WHILE RIDING
A MOTORCYCLE



IT'S IN THE DETAILS.

You know every inch of your bike. Not just the engine size, or the color code of the paint. It's the special details that only you know about. Like the way the exhaust opens up just right at 3,200rpm. Or that scuff on the footpeg you picked up while riding through Deal's Gap.

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NINE-TENTHS SUBMERGED

I'M INTERESTED IN THE PARTS I CAN'T SEE **BY KEVIN CAMERON**

Icebergs are impressive, but nine-tenths of their mass is invisible to us, submerged in the sea. We humans love excitement. It can be such a drug to us that people who've paid big money to attend a rock concert scream so loudly they can't hear the music. They are high—not on the music but on their own excitement. The actual substance of the concert (the music) is ignored. We are impressed by the visible part of the iceberg, but the part that tore a 300-foot hole below the *Titanic's* waterline is unseen.

The same is true in motorsports. An engine's power stroke is what actually propels a car or bike, but it is completely silent. The noise—which so thrills our senses—is the sudden expansion of low-energy waste gas, valved out of the cylinders. NASCAR and NHRA appreciate the intoxicating effect of fantastic noise and have deliberately retained it. Motor-cycle road racing in the US went the other way for years, reciting the mantra, “Less sound equals more ground.” We accept the idea that many people are offended by loud pipes, but banning them from the racetrack surely made racing less intoxicating. Therefore, MotoAmerica raised the roadrace decibel limit from 107 to 115 last July at Mazda Raceway Laguna Seca.

Not only are sound and fury intoxicating, but we also associate them with high performance, even though the quiet, muffled streetbikes of today can make more than three times the power of a megaphone-equipped all-out Triumph 500 road racer of 1967. The fact that noise and power are no longer causally related is submerged. The noise-equals-power idea has devolved into a “brand”—a subconscious association that can control our choices without our even being aware of it.

When drag racing expanded in the 1950s, racegoers saw dramatically raked-out steering heads. They saw

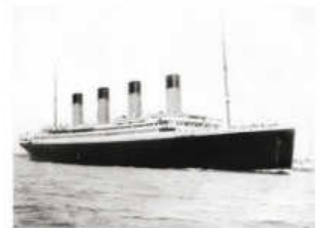
the same on Bonneville record-setters. Immediately, people wanted this unusual, exciting look, but the reason for its creation was the weakness and instability of most existing motor-cycle chassis and forks. At normal speeds, such chassis were acceptably stable, but at higher speeds they could weave violently. Increasing rake and trail restored stability but at the cost of greatly slower steering. The public cared nothing for this unseen part of the “iceberg,” so the new look became so popular that amateur builders churned out thousands of “drag-look” customs. They had raked-out front ends, 50-mile peanut gas tanks, skinny no-brake front wheels, and rigid rear frames with the widest available tires. In a word, choppers. Each element of their construction came from something originally functional, but what people perceived was contrast with the familiar.

In nature this is called “stimulus generalization.” A fruit-eating species of bird is hard-wired to be attracted to the pink color of ripe fruit, but if an experimenter offers the bird a choice between pink, ripe fruit and 2-inch steel balls painted bright red, the birds choose the more intense color. It was former *Cycle* magazine editor Steve Anderson who pointed out to me that the public is not attracted to vehicles whose features are an average of what focus groups say the public wants. Instead, they are attracted to the way-out, radical stuff that most gets their attention.

Have you heard of “rolling coal”? It is the practice of altering a diesel engine's fuel control to deliver a very rich mixture, producing thick clouds of black smoke (unburned, wasted fuel) on demand. Who wants this? Years ago, highway tractor owner-operators could usefully increase power by a moderate version of this practice, just as an assault helicopter pilot in Vietnam could wheedle his crew chief into a forbid-



BY THE NUMBERS



**41°46' NORTH
50°14' WEST**

FINAL RESTING PLACE OF THE *TITANIC*, 13,000 FEET BELOW THE SURFACE OF THE NORTH ATLANTIC

400

ESTIMATED MAXIMUM WIDTH, IN FEET, OF THE ICEBERG THAT SANK THE *TITANIC*

115

MOTOAMERICA DECIBEL LIMIT AT MAZDA RACEWAY LAGUNA SECA LAST SUMMER (EQUIVALENT TO A LOUD ROCK CONCERT OR SANDBLASTING)

den fuel-control adjustment that could pull a Huey full of soldiers out of tough situations. So in a visual equivalent of the noise-equals-power idea, black exhaust smoke came to signify power. Plus, in our era, what better way for Jack-the-lad drivers of diesel pickups to tease earnest greens, clad in all-natural fabrics in their 12-grain hybrid cars?

At the very MotoGP race where it was most obvious that Valentino Rossi was winning because he wasn't wasting time and driving force by spinning and sliding, the crowd was roaring its approval of the two Aprilia "Cube" entries, which were smoking their tires in giant slides out of every corner—in last and next-to-last place. In that 2004 scene, Vale winning was ho-hum and so was how he was winning—by creating power-transmitting and line-holding tire grip. The "Cube" was going slow because so much

of its tremendous power was going up in tire smoke. A success with crowds, it never finished better than 10th in 2004 and was withdrawn. Which reality is more "real"? The enthusiasm of the crowd or what attracted their attention? Or the unseen nine-tenths of the iceberg—the well-judged engineering necessary to win races?

I had a friend in grade school who was fascinated by Detroit's "idea cars" of the 1950s. One I remember in particular resembled two cigar-shaped jet engines from a B-58 Hustler with the space between filled in and with both driver and passenger separately covered by P-51-style Plexiglas canopies that made conversation impossible. Underneath all this was your basic late-1930s car, with A-arm front suspension, live rear axle on 1890s leaf springs, a floppy ladder frame, and an iron push-rod engine. There was nothing

WE ACCEPT
THE IDEA
THAT MANY
PEOPLE
ARE
OFFENDED
BY LOUD
PIPES,
BUT
BANNING
THEM
FROM THE
RACETRACK
SURELY
MADE
RACING
LESS
INTOXI-
CATING.

futuristic about it; its dramatic style was just a cover bolted to yesterday, its shapes shamelessly cribbed from the supersonic military aircraft of its time.

We humans are suckers for this kind of entertainment! We are far more into how something makes us feel than we are into its tiresome function. This is, all too often, the basis of marriage ("He was such a great dancer!"). Does a ballroom attraction turn into an actual friendship of lasting value? We take our chances.

So many of the motorcycles I see today seat the rider on a pointed prong, boldly jutting to the rear. To carry more than 50 miles of fuel, the tank has swollen into a tall popover, and a variety of stuck-on "flair" suggests it might be a stage prop, say from a *Captain Tomorrow* TV spoof. Okay, I accept, but what continues to interest me is the other nine-tenths—how does it all work? *CW*



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PROJECT

156



**MAN VERSUS MOUNTAIN
ON A CUSTOM-BUILT
PERFORMANCE
PROTOTYPE.
OR VICTORY
IN DEFEAT.**

By Don Canet

*Photography by
Jeff Allen and
Ackerman + Gruber*





While seated on a flat slab of granite I caught my breath and gathered my thoughts. Looming 1,000 feet above the barren landscape around me, Pikes Peak's 14,110-foot summit and our finish line were a mere 2 miles farther up the road. My heart was still racing even though our bid for the finish had come to a somber halt when the Victory Project 156 prototype V-twin racer hesitated under full throttle and then fell silent. After a few desperate seconds working the throttle in hope that the engine would relight, I pulled in the clutch and coasted to a stop where the bike now leaned against a roadside snow pole.

I sat alone—aside from fellow competitors blasting past at 45-second intervals—and reflected on how much Victory, Roland Sands Design, and the rest of the team had achieved in the five months since Project 156 (named for the number of turns on Pikes Peak) was conceived. The disappointment of this DNF was trumped by the pride I felt in having played an active part in a meaningful collaborative effort with an American motorcycle company that wanted to go racing.

An enthusiastic group of young Victory engineers worked mostly on their own time in this after-hours skunk-works project—code named Speedball—to create the liquid-cooled 1,300cc (or so) 60-degree V-twin wrapped in a custom-built Roland Sands Design frame.

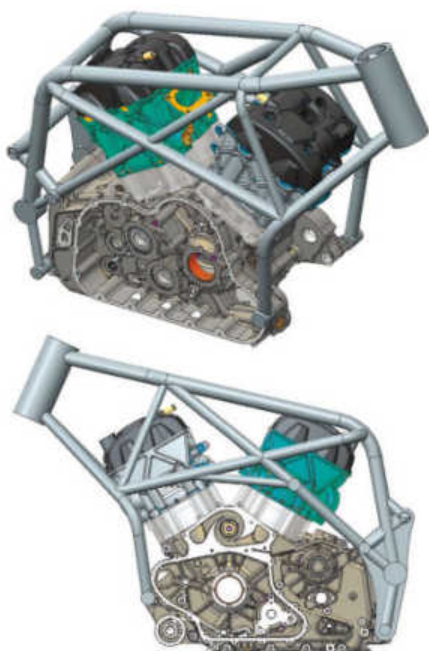


I've tested thousands of production-based motorcycles in my 25 years at Cycle World, but filling the role as the development rider for Project 156 was an entirely new experience of a very different magnitude. Witnessing the project evolve from rough design sketch to detailed CAD drawings to ultimately taking metal and carbon-fiber form was inspiring, insightful, and just plain awesome. Also, it was amazing to have a motorcycle spring from nothing but an idea so quickly. Many race teams would balk at the notion of prepping a mass-production superbike for such an effort in the same period of time.

Massive amounts of planning went into the project, but as is the case in racing, things don't always go to plan.

AN ENTHUSIASTIC GROUP OF YOUNG VICTORY ENGINEERS
WORKED MOSTLY ON THEIR OWN TIME IN THIS AFTER-HOURS
SKUNK-WORKS PROJECT—**CODE NAMED SPEEDBALL**—TO
CREATE THE LIQUID-COOLED 1,300CC (OR SO) 60-DEGREE V-TWIN
WRAPPED IN A CUSTOM-BUILT ROLAND SANDS DESIGN FRAME.





CAD drawings of early frame concept. CP pistons and Carrillo rods reside at the heart of Victory's prototype twin. 3-D printed cylinders and heads allowed RSD to fabricate the frame, exhaust, and other key components while awaiting delivery of a complete Speedball engine. The aluminum "tank" is actually a mock-up for the carbon-fiber airbox with K&N cowl induction.



Back in May, Victory reserved Buttonwillow Raceway Park in Southern California for two solid days of initial engine/chassis shakedown. The prototype engine had already undergone countless hours of running on an engine dyno at Victory's Minnesota facility, but this was the first time Project 156 had rubber meet road.

Unfortunately, build problems, compounded by a very tight time line, meant the bike wasn't ready to test on the first day. One interesting issue revealed in the latest hour was simply starting the beast! With a 15.0:1 compression ratio, the engine won the arm-wrestling match versus the starter rollers positioned under the rear tire—it would not bump-start, even in top gear. The creative solution was installing the starter

motor in the engine, with a high-current connector plugged into an external pair of car batteries wired in series for a 24-volt, high-amperage jolt. Clear!

The excitement in the garage when the bike thundered to life the first time was amazing. Roland Sands himself was there with his internal Project 156 lead, Cameron Brewer, to roll the bike onto the track for the first time. Sands did a few shakedown laps since it was his baby and, after he was satisfied it was a trackworthy bike, handed it over to me. I was glad to find the chassis stable and that suspension was in the ballpark, but throttle response was rough, and it demanded quite a bit of work to get around the track.

In the end, I got all of about 15 familiarization laps of the



1.8-mile circuit prior to showing up at Pikes Peak for the first of two sanctioned test weekends in early June.

Racing up Pikes Peak on a fully developed bike presents an infinite number of unique challenges, and while the monumental task of sorting out an unproven machine at this dangerous venue was frightening, the regret of passing on such an opportunity scared me far more.

Mountain logistics and bike maintenance were handled by the Falkner/Livingston/AF1 Racing crew. I'd benefitted from this team's experience and support in my podium effort on a Ducati Multistrada last year and was glad to have them with us as we zeroed in this prototype machine. They were truly the atomic bonds that held us all together.

And at Pikes Peak, you need all the help you can get. Still, once you're on the bike and on the course, the challenges are personal.

Topping my list of these is the very limited amount of actual wheels-on-the-road testing available on the mountain. Practice days run from daybreak until 8:30 a.m., ending prior to the road opening to the public. With race cars and bikes sharing the hill, the course is divided into a section for each group. This means that the only time competitors get to run the entire 12.42-mile course is on race day. Making matters worse this year, the top half of the mountain road remained closed during the pre-event test weekends due to record snowfall during the previous month.

Add to this the challenges faced in establishing a

workable fuel calibration map and set of altitude-specific trim tables for the 9,000- to 14,000-foot course elevation change. Our MoTeC man was busy! After every practice run the laptop was plugged into the bike's ECU to retrieve data for analysis; then a revised map was uploaded prior to the next run. This process continued right up to race day as adjustment to ride-by-wire on-throttle response, engine-braking control, and quickshift function saw incremental improvement every time we ran the bike.

It was a rough first practice weekend on the mountain as I struggled to keep the engine running entering tight hairpin turns, and we lost precious track time due to a persistent radiator leak. Chilling rain and snow foiled our third day on the mountain when I joined the half-dozen professional car drivers at an exclusive Friday-morning session leading into the second test weekend.

The following morning saw clear skies and an engine that was running strong for the very first time. I had been thinking about the chassis and suspension as we worked out fundamental fueling issues but hadn't been able to push the bike. Now that the engine ran well, it was time to step it up if we were going to learn where the bike stood on the handling front. This leads to another significant challenge of racing Pikes Peak and perhaps one of the biggest: Unlike a closed circuit where you incrementally increase speed lap after lap or focus on a particular problem area as you see the same turns every



two minutes or so, here you might get a total of two to six runs during a practice session.

So when I finally got my chance to make a real run, I did. And in hindsight it's easy to suggest I took too big a bite on my second flyer of the morning, resulting in the crash that all but totally destroyed Project 156. What I found was that I was not only exploring the limits of a new bike but the cold-grip properties of the Dunlop GP-A Pro supersport race tires. Road-surface temperature that morning was an estimated 25 degrees Fahrenheit at the upper end of the practice section, and although my crew's routine included fitting tire warmers during downtime between each run, the heat was actually being sucked out of the rubber as I ripped up the mountain.

In a heart-stopping instant I lost front grip under braking on the 100-mph approach to a second-gear hairpin and went down. The bike slammed into a guardrail and resulted in what appeared to be terminal damage. I was lucky to slide up the road on the correct side of the guardrail and with no injury. When I ran back to look at Project 156, I feared we were finished.

But the wreckage was retrieved and loaded into a team van with Paul and Becca Livingston driving day and night to deliver the bike to the RSD compound in Southern California first thing Monday morning. I was present for the damage assessment: headshaking and doubt from all concerned. There was just seven days to race week, and RSD was stacked with other commitments in its shop. And it seemed like everything on the bike was damaged.

But Sands and Brewer are racers who don't know quit. By midafternoon the bike was in the care of Dr. John's Motorcycle Frame Straightening in nearby Anaheim with an encouraging prognosis. In amazingly short order, the frame, triple clamp, and front axle were massaged back to arrow-straight condition. Brewer, along with Aaron Boss and Scott Dimick, put in 80 man-hours each to get the bike in order. Meanwhile at Polaris, the call went in to expedite a second engine. What's sleep?!

Everyone was amazed the bike rolled through tech the following Monday looking little worse for wear. Handling proved stable and true when I took to the mountain the next morning for the first of four practice days leading up to the race. My crew revised the tire-warming routine, checking tread temp with an IR thermal gun rather than trusting the temperature-setting control built into the warmers, and we played with lower-than-standard pressures. This, along with much improved late-June weather, bolstered my confidence.

As a reminder of the grim consequences of racing on Pikes Peak, Thursday morning practice ended tragically when Carl Sorensen, a local club racer and Pikes Peak veteran, plummeted off the road near the summit. While the cause of the fatal accident has not been disclosed, the final 1.5 miles of road surface is riddled with frost heaves, depressions, and pavement patchwork due to severe winter climate. The hair-raising stretch is another of the many challenges.

Friday brought added focus, as each rider's quickest run up the 5-mile bottom section served as qualifying to set the race run order within each class. We were in the Exhibition/UTV class, a sort of catch-all category for bikes and quads that don't fit elsewhere. My third and final run was our best, placing us first in class by a wide margin and fourth quickest of the 66 motorcycle entries.

So mounts another Pikes Peak dilemma: Do I take it easy

SLEEP DEPRIVATION 101

They say it takes a village... It takes an engineering and fabrication village of talented and dedicated people to build a racer from scratch in five months. These are the names (and roles) of the players and their area of operation who built Victory Project 156.

PIT CREW

Paul Livingston - Team manager
Becca Livingston - Logistics
John Francis - Crew chief
Ed Cook - Race crew
Brent Davidson - Race crew



and secure the class victory or race the mountain? The answer was clear: We had come to *race* Project 156. The team made great strides since that first weekend at Pikes, and we now had sights set on posting a top-three overall time. The only added prize to be gained was that of personal pride and perseverance.

Throughout the week the trust and feel for the bike was reflected in quicker times with each and every run up each section. The race was no different as I set what would be the second-quickest bottom sector time of the day. The run was going to plan, and I was hitting my marks and keeping the big twin on the boil. Getting the very most of this road requires venturing outside the paint lines and using available

MoTeC ENGINE MANAGEMENT/ELECTRONICS

James Whisler - Track support/calibration
Eric Morris - Project manager
Clayton Clark - Wiring harness

SPEEDCELL TECHNOLOGIES

Michael "Murph" Murphy

ROLAND SANDS DESIGN

Roland Sands - Chassis/styling design
Cameron Brewer - 156 project leader
Aaron Boss - Chassis fabrication
Scott Dimick - Fabrication/race prep
Guy Driscoll - CNC specialist

K&N FILTERS

Mike Tucker - Carbon-fiber fabrication

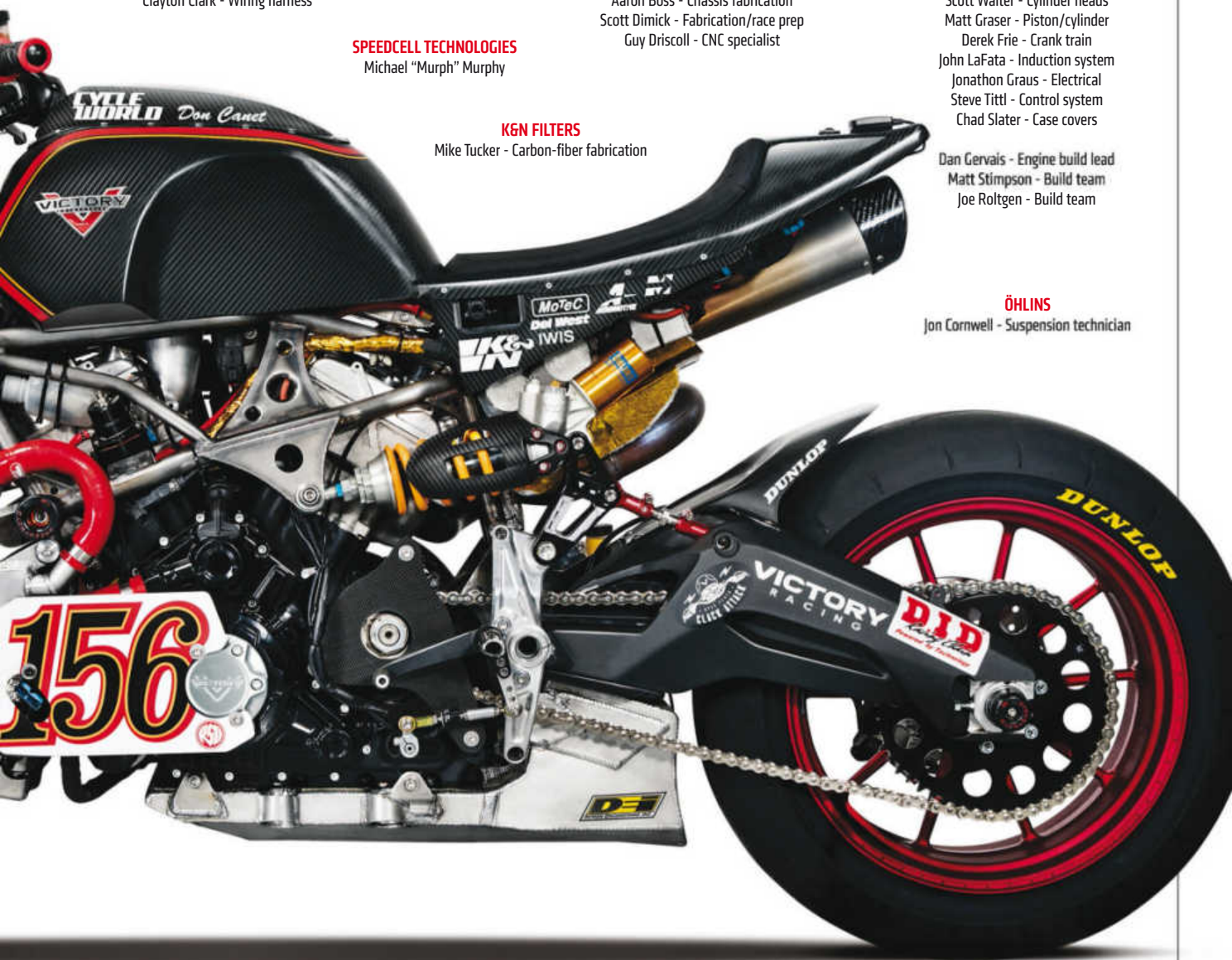
VICTORY

Alex Oppermann - Engine project lead/design
Matthew Reeves - Valve train
Scott Walter - Cylinder heads
Matt Graser - Piston/cylinder
Derek Frie - Crank train
John LaFata - Induction system
Jonathon Gaus - Electrical
Steve Tittl - Control system
Chad Slater - Case covers

Dan Gervais - Engine build lead
Matt Stimpson - Build team
Joe Roltgen - Build team

ÖHLINS

Jon Cornwell - Suspension technician



pavement. In another Pikes pitfall, the grip on the paint varies greatly from one corner to another. I was bit by Brown Bush hairpin and tucked the front at 22 mph crossing the white line at the corner's apex.

I managed to keep my right hand on the throttle throughout the low-side spill, knowing full well that stalling the engine would put an end to our day. The radiator crash slider and folding footpeg served their purpose, and Project 156 was undamaged. I picked up the bike, took a deep breath, and then clicked it back into first gear to resume the race to the finish.

I lost a total of 23 seconds to the tip-over, and the official time sheet shows we were eight seconds ahead in class and

pulling away as I entered the final sector at Devil's Playground. But as an old adage goes, "To finish first you must first finish." In the end, Mother Nature and the extended high-speed run at high elevation caused fuel vapor lock that stopped us short of the finish. So near yet so far.

As I sat on the rock overlooking the breathtaking beauty laid before me, I felt no regret and realized it simply wasn't meant to be for this man, machine, and team to achieve our lofty goal on America's mountain course.

As another worn saying goes, "There's always next year." Which happens to be the 100th anniversary of America's second oldest race... **CW**

BIG

**KTM 1290
SUPER DUKE R**

BMW R1200R

FUN



↑
EBR 1190SX

BANG YOUR HEAD
*HOW HARD DO YOU
WANT TO ROCK?*

BY BLAKE CONNER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF ALLEN

→ **BMW R1200R** → **EBR 1190SX** → **KTM 1290 SUPER DUKE R**



EBR 1190SX



Are you looking for the modern-day motorcycle equivalent to a muscle car? A bike that provides the heavy-metal soundtrack to your ride and makes you want to bang your head? A great-handling, powerful machine with comfortable upright ergonomics and something that makes you flash your lighter in the air for an encore?

Look no further than an open-class naked, as one of these motorcycles should tick those boxes for you, and it's literally about the most fun you can have on two wheels. For our test, we rounded up three sporting twins that we feel cover the spectrum of super naked from hard to heavy, including the new sportier BMW R1200R, EBR's 1190SX naked superbike, and the current king of the hill, the KTM 1290 Super Duke R.

We're not going to pull your chain. These bikes can't do it all, but they come

damn close. As commuters, they will make you get up and head out the door an hour early just so you can extend your ride to work by 30 or 40 miles. As weekend warriors, you won't find too many other bikes that are more entertaining strafing apexes and getting your adrenaline pumping. The one place they fall a bit short is on longer-distance rides (which we did anyway), where the lack of a fairing or any means of storage limits their utility and comfort. Even then, you'll have a hard time not smiling.

BMW R1200R: Shoot to Thrill

This model has been a fixture in BMW's lineup in one form or another for ages, but as the Bavarian company continues its path through a midlife crisis, so does its product line. The old R was getting pretty stodgy, the hairline receding, and the belly starting to get a bit plump. But BMW has clearly been on a mission to change its image, to shelf the perception that it only made bikes for baby boomers. You can pretty much thank one bike—the S1000RR—for opening the door to a younger generation of BMW customer. But, across the range, BMWs have been injected with a sportier genealogy (little blue pills?), and the R is no exception.

One look at the front end of the R1200R was all it took to understand that BMW wanted a sportier chassis.



BMW R1200R



KTM 1290 SUPER DUKE R

Gone is the Telelever front end, and in its place is a 45mm inverted telescopic fork. "I was very impressed with this R1200R's sporting capability," Road Test Editor Don Canet said, "particularly so considering its comfort and convenience features, including a tail rack and centerstand. Pretty unassuming bike at a glance, but it makes easy work of winding back roads."

When you are choosing your option package, make sure it includes ESA; you will thank us. "ESA II's Dynamic mode delivered great feel and feedback when heating up the pace on winding roads," Canet added. "Dynamic felt harsh on the freeway, but a push of the button to toggle into the Road setting frees the damping and allows the bike to float over bumps and slab joints." Our only comfort gripe is the exceptionally close seat-to-peg relationship due to the 31.1-inch seat height. There is a much taller option. If you have legs, you will want to opt for it.

The R is the lightest BMW to use the latest liquid-cooled 1,170cc boxer twin.



THE NUMBERS

BIKE		BMW R1200R	EBR 1190SX	KTM 1290 SUPER DUKE R
Price	⊕	\$18,639 (as tested)	\$15,995	\$16,999
Dry weight	⊕	501 lb.	416 lb.	446 lb.
Wheelbase	⊕	60.0 in.	56.0 in.	58.7 in.
Seat height	⊕	30.7 in.	32.3 in.	32.7 in.
Fuel mileage	⊕	45 mpg	37 mpg	42 mpg
1/4 mile	⊕	10.76 sec. @ 123.36 mph	10.13 sec. @ 139.60 mph	10.07 sec. @ 138.88 mph
0-60 mph	⊕	2.8 sec.	2.6 sec.	2.7 sec.
Top gear, 40-60 mph	⊕	3.0 sec.	3.2 sec.	3.1 sec.
Top gear, 60-80 mph	⊕	3.0 sec.	3.4 sec.	3.0 sec.
Top speed	⊕	142 mph	161 mph	158 mph
Horsepower	⊕	107.7 @ 7720 rpm	153.8 @ 10,510 rpm	151.3 @ 9130 rpm
Torque	⊕	78.5 lb.-ft. @ 5170 rpm	84.6 lb.-ft. @ 8050 rpm	94.6 lb.-ft. @ 8060 rpm
Braking, 30-0 mph	⊕	30 ft.	30 ft.	31 ft.
Braking, 60-0 mph	⊕	119 ft.	126 ft.	127 ft.

The engine provides excellent thrust, and the quickshifter keeps it on the boil with ridiculous ease, while the no-clutch auto-blip downshift is pure magic.

Those not in the know will totally underestimate the R's potential; it is as much of a "sleeper" as there is in motorcycling. The R is the AC/DC of our group; it pumps out a simple, rhythmic cadence and is anything but flashy yet rocks loud and hard. It's only when you really wrench the bike's throttle and tap into the 78.5 pound-feet of peak torque hammering out of sweeping bends that you really get it. On the B-Side, hit the freeway, click it in sixth, hit the cruise control, and the engine is supremely smooth, making for a relaxing ride.

EBR 1190SX: Ace of Spades

What can we say about EBR other than it is quickly on the way to either representing motorcycling's proverbial unicorn or the dodo bird, depending on your opinion. Either way, the reality is that we already had an 1190SX on order from Erik Buell and company just prior to creditors' dead-bolting EBR's doors back in April. So when a crate with this seriously endangered species showed up

on a truck for Editor-in-Chief Mark Hoyer and me to unload, it was akin to an Elvis sighting (skinny Elvis, by the way).

The single most frustrating thing about the SX, and EBR in general, is that there is so much damn potential in this package. Haters are going to be haters, but when Buell the man was finally untethered from his umbilical cord to Harley, he was able to start to prove that his concepts and solutions weren't just gimmicks but had sound engineering and provided excellent performance.

In stripped-down SX form, the 1,190cc, 72-degree, liquid-cooled twin is essentially the same specification as the one in the RX superbike. In the SX, the engine produced 154 hp and 84.6 pound-feet of torque, which means it's giving up 7 hp of top-end power versus the 2014 RX we tested ("Big Booms," July 2014). Unlike the BMW and KTM, which between the two feature virtually every electronic bell and/or whistle currently utilized in

motorcycling, the EBR has a much more basic electronics package. What you get is 21-level traction control, but since the SX doesn't use ride by wire, there are no power modes or true wheelie control, etc.

Compared to the other bikes in this test, the EBR is a bit gruff and grumpy (and also louder since the factory muffler was replaced by stub stacks), kind of the motorcycling equivalent to Lemmy Kilmister, Motörhead frontman. Off stage, it's a bit uncomfortable and not in its element, but once in front of the microphone, the bassy twin produces a raw, fast, furious, and unapologetic soundtrack to your ride. It never feels snappy or aggressive, but it does drive hard. Somehow it's almost turbodiesel-like and nearly as quick as the KTM at the strip. A bit of low-frequency vibration through the handlebar and footpegs, a deceptively slow-revving nature, and less-than-perfect fueling keep the SX engine from feeling as refined or as exciting as the other two machines here.

But that chassis! Man, does this thing handle. The bike snaps into turns instantly, is dead stable and neutral once there, and grip from the front end is totally dependable. After many years of Buell and EBR rim brakes that were just okay or somewhat flawed, the SX testbike's rim brake worked very well, but where is the ABS?

KTM 1290 Super Duke R: Whiplash

Our love for KTM's 1290 Super Duke R is well documented. How can you not love an audacious machine that takes the term "brute force" to a whole new level? And yet it provides a means of taming it—via

UPS

DOWNS

BMW R1200R



- Available with every bell and whistle BMW has
- Excellent comfort
- Total sleeper performance

- Options inflate price a lot
- Just a bikini fairing short of awesome
- "Pro Modes" should be standard, not options

EBR 1190SX



- Competitive power output
- Excellent handling and feedback
- America's own streetfighter

- Vibration through bars/pegs
- Seat torture on longer rides
- You may never actually get to ride one

KTM 1290 SUPER DUKE R



- Torque, torque, torque
- Awesome electronics: tame or mental
- Top-quality suspension

- Can't toggle TC/ABS on fly
- Threat to license
- How about electronic suspension?



can't figure out if EBR has already played its farewell tour or if it has another comeback up its sleeve, it has to go on stage first. In a perfect world, EBR would rebound once again with better resources and live to see another day where it could spend the kind of money its competitors do on electronics and development. What the company achieved in a very short time with an exceptionally small staff is pretty amazing. As of this writing, EBR was set to be auctioned with the hoped-for result being renewed production. As for the bike itself, it has great potential, but it clearly met its match in the form of the two ultra-refined Euros, especially considering that it is very close in price without offering as many features.

In the middle of the lineup is the BMW. Now, just like any big show, you might have purchased the ticket for the middle act in the first place. Get in, see them play, and hit the exit before the parking lot is jammed. The BMW proved to be incredibly enjoyable to ride in every situation we threw at it. It's comfortable, electronically sophisticated, torquey, and handles extremely well. If flying under the radar is the perfect recipe to having fun without attracting unwanted attention, the R might just be your perfect match. If there is one thing lacking in the R's set list, it's that knockout hit.

For us, the KTM 1290 Super Duke R provides that track. It is amazingly versatile, with electronics that allow it to hum along like a good ballad when in Rain or Road mode, and then with the flick of a few buttons you are suddenly thrashing down the road with the front wheel in the air, the rear tire spinning and your heart racing as the bike unleashes its full potential. Combine the power-chord-chunk engine performance with a chassis that is as sharp and precise as ripping a good solo, and you have our winner. Encore, encore, encore! Well, until the cops come in and bust up the show... **CW**

its excellent electronics—for when you don't feel like jumping into the mosh pit.

It might be a bit too much to say that the Super Duke R is all about the engine, but when something steals your attention as much as the 1,301cc twin in this bike does, it's kind of hard to ignore. Those two massive 108mm pistons pound out a deep beat reminiscent of Lars Ulrich drilling his Tama double bass drum kit into submission.

For sure, this bike makes an impressive 151 hp, but it's the Hayabusa-like 95 pound-feet of torque that hits you like a concussion grenade. With the ride mode switched to Sport (ultra snappy) and the TC turned off, you quickly discover how raw and brutally fast this bike is; clutching up fourth-gear wheelies at ridiculously illegal speeds is so easy that we would strongly advise against riding in any mode other than Rain (soft delivery/less output) around town. It's your license. Don't say we didn't warn you.

But for sure this bike has a lot more up its sleeve than simply a kick-ass engine. The chassis is amazing too. As the flagship sportbike in KTM's lineup, the Super Duke R got all the good stuff:

Up front is a burly, fully adjustable 48mm inverted WP fork that provides excellent feel and damping, while a shock of the same make controls the single-sided swingarm out back. Its Brembo monoblocks are near perfection too. We pretty much left the manually adjustable suspension alone. The fork and shock provided precise damping on a wide variety of twisty roads, from potholed to smooth, yet proved to not be punishing on the freeway.

On that subject, the night of our photo shoot, I rode the Super Duke 175 miles home from above Santa Barbara after already logging 325 miles that day. I can attest to the fact that despite the lack of a fairing, the ergonomics and seat proved to be amazingly comfortable, which was the last thing on earth I expected this master of mayhem to provide.

Coda

If this were a huge outdoor music festival, someone has got to be the opener, and someone has to be the headliner. That's just the way it is. So who hits the stage before the sun fades over the horizon? In this test, that's easy. Considering that as of this writing, we

ESCAPE THE AVERAGE AND DISCOVER THE EXTRAORDINARY

**KTM 1290 SUPER ADVENTURE
IN A CLASS OF IT'S OWN**



READY TO RACE
» www.ktm.com

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Do not imitate riding scenes, professional riders on closed courses/roadways, always wear protective clothing and obey traffic regulations. Vehicles shown may vary from series model and show optional equipment at additional cost.

Photo: R. Schedl

KTM

KTM POWERPARTS **KTM POWERWEAR** **KTM ORIGINAL SPARE PARTS** **KTM RIDE ORANGE**



MORE FUN



BIG GRINS, MIDDLEWEIGHTS

BY DON CANET
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF ALLEN

- DUCATI HYPERMOTARD SP
- KAWASAKI VERSYS 650 LT
- MV AGUSTA BRUTALE 800
DRAGSTER
- SUZUKI GSX-R750

Are you one of these people who won't crack a smile unless you're on an open-class bike? If so, you probably haven't ridden any of these middleweights. Each of these dissimilar machines, in its own way, will have you grinning from ear to ear inside your trusty full-face lid.

We know that the definition of fun is about as broad as the European and Asian continents separating our pairs of Italian- and Japanese-built motorcycles. Some folks like to be visually titillated before the sidestand has even been stowed; others need the wail of the exhaust under hard acceleration. Still, others find the most joy in packing for an overnight trip and taking all day to ride there.

Wherever you are on that spectrum, chances are good that one of these personality-packed, non-retro middleweights is calling your name.





DUCATI HYPERMOTARD SP

DUCATI HYPERMOTARD SP

Conceived a decade ago during the supermoto boom, the Pierre Terblanche-styled Hypermotard applied dirt bike-inspired elements to a road-going platform powered by a 1,078cc, desmodromic, air-cooled, two-valve, 90-degree V-twin. The Hypermotard SP, introduced two years ago, employs Ducati's 821cc liquid-cooled V-twin featuring four-valve heads and 11-degree

valve overlap, which provides much smoother low-rpm operation and instant-on power across the rev range. Awesome torque here.

Our SP testbike gets additional tasty bits: forged Marchesini wheels, grippier Pirelli Supercorsa SP tires, a race-quality 50mm Marzocchi fork, and an Öhlins shock. The \$2,800 upgrade is completed with a carbon-fiber front mud guard and engine covers, plus a race-derived saddle.

A warning: While the SP's taller stance provides superior cornering clearance, sub-6-footers will be balancing on tiptoes at stops. But there's big-time fun to be had once the bike is in gear and the light-pull ATPC slipper/assist clutch is engaged. The chug-a-lug low-rev drive snatch of yore is absent, transforming the Hyper into an urban weapon that turns crosstown errands into your own personal sorties.

With Ducati selectable ride modes, eight-level TC, and ABS, the Hypermotard tracks true, and wheelies are kept in check if you're not in the mood. But when you're feeling it, simply dial back the electronic intervention and unleash that Hyper personality. Back-road blasts are just that, a blast, aided by light handling, crisp ride-by-wire throttle, and excellent Brembo monoblock brakes. In capable hands on the right tight roads, the Hypermotard can shred liter-class supersports.

It just doesn't get any more fun than that.

KAWASAKI VERSYS 650 LT

For many of us, the greatest joy is found in two-wheel travel and adventure. But the machines that fuel such fancy often carry a high premium. Not the Versys 650 LT; it turns dreams into reality at a very reasonable \$8,699. This Kawasaki, a versatile everyday mount, is also a world-class workday commuter.



KAWASAKI VERSYS 650 LT



MV AGUSTA BRUTALE 800 DRAGSTER

The Versys 650 received some comfort upgrades for 2015, including a roomier seat-to-peg relationship, a larger fairing, a height-adjustable windscreen, and revised rubber mounts for the engine and handlebar. As a result, this bike has all-day ergonomics, and minimal vibration from the liquid-cooled 649cc parallel twin reaches the rider.

Sporting and load-carrying capability for 2015 has been improved for solo and two-up riding thanks to a Showa SFF inverted 41mm long-travel fork (offering spring preload and rebound damping adjustment) and a new shock absorber featuring remote spring preload adjustment. ABS is also standard.

Best of all, the LT version is equipped with hand guards and a pair of 28-liter color-matched saddlebags that utilize the same key as the ignition. Having lived with this same bag design on our long-term Ninja 1000, I am a big proponent of its helmet-swallowing practicality, plus its ease of installation and removal.

On freeways, curvy mountain routes, even graded dirt roads, both solo and two-up, the LT took every mile in stride. Indeed, on this new Kawasaki, the possibilities for fun and exploration seem limitless.

MV AGUSTA BRUTALE 800 DRAGSTER

When you're looking to express your passion with a bike that stands out from the crowd, the head naturally turns to Italy. And one glance at the MV Brutale

family of sport-naked models is all it takes to see that these bikes tickle the two-wheel funny bone like none other.

The Brutale 800 Dragster starts with a proven engine/chassis package and takes it down the road of outrageous style, eventually becoming what is perhaps best described as a contemporary sport bobber. Fully exposed within the unique-looking chassis is MV's liquid-cooled 798cc inline-three, one of the

most soul-stirring engines from Europe in recent years. As you click through the Dragster's quickshift-assisted, close-ratio six-speed gearbox, it's as if you're hearing angels singing out the Dragster's triple-outlet exhaust.

Seated in the rock-hard saddle, you'll feel every pebble in the road transmitted though the firmly calibrated 42mm Marzocchi fork and Sachs shock. The seat also has an aggressive forward cant that feels best when you're accelerating hard or while lofting the front wheel. And speaking of wheelies, the fun is a mere snap of right wrist away in the bottom three cogs when the eight-level TC is dialed back to a minimal setting.

As on MV's flagship F4 superbike, MVICS (Motor and Vehicle Integrated Control System) gives the Dragster custom adjustability with Sport, Normal, and Rain ride modes. About the only thing it can't alter is the sweep angle of the handlebar...

As quirky as the Dragster's stubby seat appears at first sight, I recall having the same reaction over an odd Duc tail gracing the original Monster. If history is any indication, such things grow on you.

SUZUKI GSX-R750

A throwback to superbikes of the 1980s and '90s, the GSX-R750 celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, having outlived all other 750cc sporting fours,



SUZUKI GSX-R750

THE NUMBERS

BIKE		DUCATI HYPERMOTARD SP	KAWASAKI VERSYS 650 LT	MV AGUSTA BRUTALE 800 DRAGSTER	SUZUKI GSX-R750
Price	⊕	\$14,995	\$7,599	\$14,798	\$12,299
Dry weight	⊕	411 lb.	468 lb.	420 lb.	397 lb.
Wheelbase	⊕	59.5 in.	55.7 in.	54.6 in.	54.7 in.
Seat height	⊕	35.4 in.	33.3 in.	31.7 in.	31.7 in.
Fuel mileage	⊕	42 mpg	47 mpg	36 mpg	46 mpg
1/4 mile	⊕	11.17 sec. @ 118.67 mph	12.51 sec. @ 103.45 mph	10.66 sec. @ 126.65 mph	10.35 sec. @ 136.91 mph
0-60 mph	⊕	3.0 sec.	3.8 sec.	2.9 sec.	2.9 sec.
Top gear, 40-60 mph	⊕	3.3 sec.	4.1 sec.	2.8 sec.	3.8 sec.
Top gear, 60-80 mph	⊕	3.6 sec.	4.8 sec.	3.0 sec.	3.5 sec.
Top speed	⊕	131 mph	111 mph	140 mph	163 mph
Horsepower	⊕	91.0 @ 9290 rpm	63.2 @ 8530 rpm	110.4 @ 11,530 rpm	122.2 @ 12,530 rpm
Torque	⊕	55.9 lb.-ft. @ 7650 rpm	43.6 lb.-ft. @ 7100 rpm	54.6 lb.-ft. @ 8810 rpm	54.0 lb.-ft. @ 11,110 rpm
Braking, 30-0 mph	⊕	32 ft.	32 ft.	32 ft.	30 ft.
Braking, 60-0 mph	⊕	127 ft.	128 ft.	132 ft.	129 ft.



CHANCES ARE GOOD THAT ONE OF THESE PERSONALITY-PACKED, NON-RETRO MIDDLEWEIGHTS IS CALLING YOUR NAME.

If canyon carving or trackdays top your list of fast and fun activities, there's no better scalpel than the GSX-R750 for the skilled hand.

SEVERAL SHADES OF FUN

Face it: Picking a winner among these vastly dissimilar machines would reflect a rider's personal preferences and interests more than anything. The Hypermotard's intoxicating frolic factor is impossible to ignore, and the versatile Versys 650 LT shines in its sheer utility. As for the head-turning MV Dragster, it's hard-core fun best enjoyed in small doses. And anybody looking for a classic superbike should seek out the GSX-R750, which delivers refined unfiltered performance. *CW*

the last of which faded into history a decade ago. While Suzuki is motivated by heritage, the GSX-R750 remains relevant due to its superb balance of power, weight, handling, and price.

To truly appreciate this bike, you need to know one thing above all: It shares its chassis with its 600 supersport sibling. An oversquare bored and stroked version of a bike designed and developed for racing at the world championship level, the GSX-R750 delivers sharp and agile handling with a dose of midrange delivery that makes it shine as a real-world streetbike.

Pulling away from a stop is a breeze, thanks to clean response and ample bottom-end torque. Butter-smooth shift action and seamless delivery throughout the rev range make for fluid acceleration, while the slipper clutch alleviates any rear wheel hop when downshifting on corner entry. Yes, this Gixxer foregoes electronic rider aids (no TC or ABS here), but it does feature two levels of S-DMS (Suzuki Drive Mode Selector) that can be toggled on the fly. You can choose between full power and a reduced power/response

setting when road conditions are sketchy.

Steadfast stability, telepathic front-end feel, excellent cornering clearance, and confidence-inspiring Brembo monoblock calipers allow the GSX-R pilot to hit his marks with the utmost precision.

UPS

DOWNES

**DUCATI
HYPERMOTARD
SP**



- Super supermoto
- Wheelies!
- Premium sport radials

- A bit twitchy
- Traffic-ticket magnet
- Too tall Jones

**KAWASAKI
VERSYS
650 LT**



- Super comfy for the long haul
- Great bags included
- Sporty and very practical

- No centerstand due to exhaust
- No compression-damping adjustment for fork

**MV AGUSTA
BRUTALE
800
DRAGSTER**



- Great engine performance and feel
- Invigorating exhaust note
- Extensive electronics

- Rock-hard saddle
- Clumsy dash interface
- Wheelie bar not included

**SUZUKI
GSX-R750**



- 600 handling, 750 power
- Extensive racing pedigree
- Don't need no stinkin' electronic intervention

- Some might say it's a relic
- She is getting long in the tooth
- No ABS



- 

**RG** COMPOUND:

- HIGH GRIP, ANTI-SLIP ON DRY AND WET SURFACES (SRC - Slip Resistance according to EN 13634:2010)
- HIGH THERMO ABRASION RESISTANCE
- HEAT RESISTANCE SCULPTURES

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Transverse grooves evacuate water and for maximum wet surface grip.

- Beveled lateral grooves channel mud and gravel to when off-road.

- Indented tread grooves help to provide consistent lateral grip even as the tire wears.

SAW-SHAPED SIPING
IMPROVES **TRACTION,**
CONTROL AND LATERAL
GRIP ON SOFT, WET AND
MUDDY SURFACES.



IMPROVED **WATER, GRAVEL
AND MUD EVACUATION**
INCREASES OFF-ROAD GRIP.
BETTER **GRIP AND MORE TRACTION**
ON MORE SURFACES.



NOT STURGIS 2015

THE ANTISOCIAL BIKER RALLY OF ONE

By **Peter Jones** Photography by **Drew Ruiz**

I WENT TO STURGIS, BUT NO ONE WAS THERE. THAT'S BECAUSE I WENT IN JUNE. THIS WASN'T BY ACCIDENT.

A good half-dozen times I've attended the motorcycle rally that's colloquially called Sturgis. Each time I come away with an unfulfilled curiosity about western South Dakota. In the fog of 300,000 to 400,000 motorcyclists, it's impossible to experience the authentic character of the region. Yet beneath the rumbling haze of din and spectacle, there's a hint that it's a special place. There's a hint of something.

This year marked the 75th motorcycle rally that's been taking place in Sturgis. But Sturgis isn't just the name of a small town of 6,500 in western South Dakota. For a week each year it's the name of the largest community in that entire state, with an estimated population of 400,000. During that week, Sturgis isn't just a single, static town; it's a whole region. It starts in Wall, South Dakota, near the Badlands, and extends west to Devils Tower, Wyoming. It's bordered on the north by Belle Fourche and on the south by Hot Springs, encompassing more than 12,000 square miles of buttes and bluffs, needles, hoodoos, and what-have-yous. And in the middle of it stand the majestic and mysterious Black Hills. So just what is this thing called Sturgis when it's not this thing called Sturgis? I had to know.







**ENCOMPASSING
MORE THAN
12,000
SQUARE MILES
OF BUTTES
AND BLUFFS,
NEEDLES,
HOODOOS, AND
WHAT-HAVE-
YOUS. AND IN
THE MIDDLE OF
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SO JUST
WHAT IS THIS
THING CALLED
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STURGIS? I HAD
TO KNOW.**

For my ride, I picked up a nice blue 2015 Road Glide from Black Hills Harley-Davidson. There was my first evidence that Sturgis was only yet far distant thunder. The expanded acres of pavement surrounding the dealership, which itself recently tripled in size, was mostly vacant. Black Hills Harley-Davidson is a must-stop for many riders attending Sturgis, located right off Interstate 90, just north of Rapid City. On any day during the event its parking area is an ocean of motorcycles, with Harley baggers heartily dominating the count.

I'd never before ridden this model of Harley-Davidson, with its frame-mounted fairing, just reintroduced into the lineup after taking a year off. I was concerned it might feel weird not having the fairing move with the handlebars, but it took about two seconds to get comfortably accustomed to the Road Glide.

A night in Rapid City at the Hotel Alex Johnson put me into the right frame of mind. Built in 1928, a year after sculpting began at Mount Rushmore, the hotel has a Native American interior motif. The lobby has life-size castings of heads in full headdress, and mosaic tiling on the floor and chandelier is ornamented with swastikas. These swastikas tend

to shock the uninformed, not knowing that they're an archetypal symbol dating from Neolithic times.

Thursday night in Rapid City is party night. All summer long, Art Alley is lined with vendors, while a full sound stage blocks 7th Street. The packed crowd is a mix of locals, near-locals, and tourists, many sporting cowboy hats but few wearing black T-shirts.

Some 40 miles north, Sturgis on a June Friday morning is a dusty agricultural town. Lazelle Street, the primary boulevard through Sturgis, almost looks normal, except for an unusual number of large parking lots. The famous Knuckle Saloon was open for business, and there was even a vendor set up on the corner selling T-shirts. Weirdest of all, Main Street had cars and pickups parked on it. Plus one blue motorcycle.

We met with Mayor Mark Carstensen on the corner of Main and Harley-Davidson Way, which



was formerly 2nd Street. On the northwest corner on the intersection the Harley-Davidson Rally Point was busily under construction, scheduled for dedication July 31, 2015.

Carstensen has been mayor of Sturgis since 2011. Shortly after he was elected, a new city manager was appointed, and they drafted an economic development plan that is now bearing fruit. "As far as City Hall goes, we're working on the rally all year round. About 70 percent of the time that's what we're working on.

"We've created new ordinances with the goal of downtown revitalization. We want year-round business—business that will invest in the community. Like this rally point funded by Harley. The city owns it, but we were able to build it without city funds. It's not just for them for the rally. It's for the city. It will have a fireplace, benches. It's a meeting place for us. Our Christmas tree will be there. It's for the city."

When asked how much money the rally brings into the city of Sturgis, Mayor Carstensen said, "The number that's used is statewide because the impact is that wide. It's a billion dollars that's estimated to come into the state each year due to





THE MAIN POINT OF THIS JOURNEY THOUGH ISN'T TO DWELL ON EMPTY LOTS AND DESERTED STREETS; IT'S TO ENGAGE IN THE MANY PLACES ACROSS THE REGION THAT ARE CHOKED WITH BIKES AND BIKERS DURING THE EVENT, TO SEE WHAT THEY'RE REALLY LIKE.

the rally. Sturgis is only so big, so the rally covers a lot of other ground. And it's a big state to cross, so the benefit is statewide."

Doing some quick math in my head, it would take 400,000 bikers spending \$2,500 each to arrive at a billion dollars. For a five-night stay, plus food, beer, event tickets, beer, gas, and beer, \$2,500 per attendee seems a reasonable guess. But what about the thousands of vendors, and vendor fees, and taxes, and... I think a billion dollars is a low estimate. For Sturgis, the V of "twins" is V for "victory."

The mayor joined us for a stop at the fairgrounds, located on a low bluff just a few blocks from the city center. It's where the first Black Hills Classic was held, founded by Clarence "Pappy" Hoel and the Jackpine Gypsies. The short-track racing took place on this dirt half-mile. Like every long-standing rally, racing was the core excuse that the Sturgis rally was built around. But the 75th will be the last rally that this short track will see; the fairgrounds are being relocated east of the city.

"A half-mile track, an MX track, and rodeo grounds that are separate are going to be built," Carstensen said. "This area will be purposed

differently, with households. We have a VA hospital that's a big economic driver for us. That's what the housing here will be for—for families to move here, work here, live here."

The main point of this journey though isn't to dwell on empty lots and deserted streets; it's to engage in the many places across the region that are choked with bikes and bikers during the event, to see what they're really like. The purpose is to smell the sweet grass, pet a buffalo, wrestle a mountain goat. Maybe buy a cowboy hat.

On the high prairie just east of Sturgis stands the imposing Bear Butte. It dominates the northern horizon of famed, party-central Buffalo Chip. It's a majestic, igneous anomaly, rising about 1,200 feet

above the prairie. It was, and still is, sacred to the many tribes of the Sioux and Cheyenne. In 1857, an estimated 10,000 Sioux gathered there to plan their future. Red Cloud, Sitting Bull, and Crazy Horse were there. It's where the Creator communicates to Native Americans; as was their way, it's basically a church built by the Creator.

In many places in this region—Bear Butte, Black Hills, Devils Tower—prayer cloth and tobacco pouches hang from trees. These are religious offerings and must be left undisturbed. Without getting into the current politics or disputes of this



**DON'T RIDE A
MOTORCYCLE
AFTER DARK
THROUGH
OPEN BUFFALO
RANGE.
THEY ARE
PERFECTLY
CAMOUFLAGED
TO BE COM-
PLETELY
INVISIBLE
AFTER DUSK.
THEIR DARK,
FLUFFY FUR
SUCKS IN
THE GLOW OF
HEADLIGHTS,
MAKING THEM
APPEAR AS
EMPTY
SHADOWS
AGAINST
BLACKNESS.**

region, please note that many sites in western South Dakota are sacred to the Sioux, and the Sioux still live in the area.

Devils Tower is an exposed magma plug. Its unpleasant-sounding description doesn't do justice to its monolithic magnificence. It lords over the surrounding bluffs with authority, standing shockingly steep and tall, built out of weirdly angled pillars. It almost makes no sense that it exists.

Devils Tower is a mistranslation of the Lakota Sioux name Mato Tipi, which means Bear Lodge. Of course, it's sacred—like another natural-born church. It's the sort of geological feature that could make a believer out of a doubter.

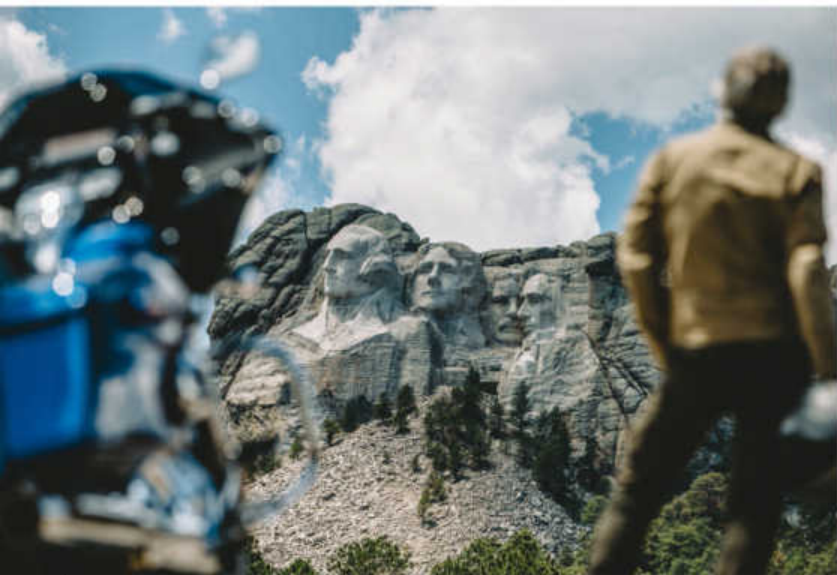
We had approached Devils Tower from Belle Fourche. Don't do that. Take Route 14 from Sundance. Approaching Devils Tower from that route shows it standing out in full blossom against its surroundings. From Sundance the road crosses high ground, providing grand views for many miles

before you arrive.

Spearfish Canyon is an inconvenient route to take from the northern edge of the Black Hills down to Deadwood. Fortunately, riding in the Black Hills is all about enjoying inconvenient routes. Route 14A originates in the city of Spearfish, where summer party night is on Fridays. The route follows the floor of a narrow canyon that winds its way for a dozen miles into the hills, passing by Bridal Veil Falls.

Deadwood is the party town of South Dakota. By luck, we'd arrived on the weekend of the Wild Bill Days. For an authentic experience, we stayed in the Franklin Hotel, which is the historic hotel of the Silverado Casino.

Two blocks of Deadwood's Main Street were blocked off, with local bands warming up the crowd for Crystal Gayle. Unlike Sturgis, Main Street in Deadwood is thriving year-round, with barely a storefront unoccupied. Plus, nearly every building is from the 19th century, with the new ones designed



**IT'S REAL,
IT'S FAKE,
IT'S CARVED
IN STONE,
IT'S BEEN
IN MOVIES,
AND IT'S THE
LARGEST
STONE
CARVING
THAT YOU'LL
EVER SEE
(UNLESS YOU
DRIVE 17 MILES
SOUTHWEST
TO THE
CRAZY HORSE
MONUMENT).**

to complement the historic attitude of the town, its street paved in brick.

Of course, the Wild Bill that this event refers to is Hickok, who famously got dead in Deadwood, leaving a curse on a hand of aces and eights since early August of 1876. Across the street from where he was shot, and a block south, is the No. 10 Saloon. It has a chair on display that is claimed to be the one Hickok was sitting in when he died. It's a completely unsubstantiated claim.

We had some beverages there, while sitting next to a couple from Sioux Falls who were celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary. She works in upper management at a corporation while he, in her words, "...earns his living on the back of a horse." A cowboy.

She continued, "You should see him there, talking to the horses, learning who they are. When I see him doing that... There is no other man."

Here they were, celebrating 20 years of marriage, in the same silly, rowdy, cowboy bar where they'd spent their wedding night. She pointed out to me an old framed photo high on one wall, of an unknown frontier woman. She said that her husband and her vowed their love to each other in front of that picture on their wedding night and that whenever they return they repeat the vow.

There I was, sitting with a photographer I'd never met before, yet otherwise in life alone, wondering why I'd gotten my dream of that so wrong so many times.

"Barkeep, I'd like another beer."

MOUNT RUSHMORE. It's real, it's fake, it's carved in stone, it's been in movies, and it's the largest stone carving that you'll ever see (unless you drive 17 miles southwest to the Crazy Horse Monument). It was created by Gutzon Borglum, who was the original sculptor of the Confederate Memorial on Stone Mountain in Georgia. He walked off that job

following a dispute with that project's funders but not until after he'd developed the tools for making big sculptures.

Route 16A, heading south from between Mount Rushmore and Keystone, is unlike any other road in the USA. It has three Pigtail Bridges and narrow tunnels. The Pigtail Bridges are curves of more than 360 degrees, looping the roadway over the top of itself.

The tunnels were purposely carved to frame straight at Mount Rushmore, for travelers heading north. So be sure to stop and look back if you're going south. The route is tight and slow going but provides an intimate cruise through the granite spires and tall pines of the Black Hills.

Custer State Park covers much of the southern Black Hills. It's a place where buffalo roam free. It's also where mountain goats live, particularly in the Needles Highway area. The goats are brash, beastly, wild-eyed, and up to no good. They have horns. They're tourists, just like you and me. Well, actually, they're escapees. They were brought from the Rocky Mountains to a fenced enclosure in Custer State Park in the 1920s. All six of them escaped within a matter of weeks. They or their children have been committing incest all across the Black Hills ever since. So they're a bit demented.

Just last decade, two new groups of goats have been introduced to these inbreeders, to try to diversify the gene pool. Word is that the project has been effective. The goats likely won't attack you, but they do love climbing things. Shiny, chromed motorcycles can be very attractive to them.

Buffalo also roam freely in Custer. They're actually bison, but we're going to call them buffalo because, well, hey, most of us still call Native Americans Indians, and that's a miss by half a world, proving that we don't really care what we call something. Plus, if we don't maintain the misnomer it creates all kinds of problems: Bison Bill?

Don't ride a motorcycle after dark through open buffalo range. They are perfectly camouflaged to be completely invisible after dusk. Their dark, fluffy fur sucks in the glow of headlights, making them appear as empty shadows against blackness. A mature male weighs about a ton, and most of that weight is muscle. They can run up to 40 mph. In a dragrace, a buffalo will likely beat your 60-foot time. To them, the revving thunder of a big twin is a growl of challenge. A buffalo will accept a challenge.

The Crazy Horse Monument is beset with controversy even among Native Americans. It was commissioned by an Oglala Lakota Sioux chief, but, to many, it violates the sensitivities of Sioux culture. Carving a sculpture into mountain in the sacred Black Hills is considered sacrilegious by some. Additionally, it goes against any plausible wishes of Crazy Horse himself, a warrior who successfully never allowed a picture to be taken of him. So this monument isn't even really of Crazy Horse; it's an interpretive dramatization of him, at best.



Engineered with





GEOLOGICALLY, THERE'S SOMETHING UNEXPECTED AND WEIRD AROUND EVERY CORNER. EXPERIENCING THAT FOR A FEW DAYS CAN CHANGE YOU IN THE BEST WAY THAT TRAVEL CAN. ...IF YOU LET YOURSELF BE CONSUMED BY ITS STARTLING FEATURES, AND FEEL ITS PULSE, IT BECOMES EASY TO UNDERSTAND WHY SO MUCH OF IT IS SACRED.

Some, though, realize that fighting it would be just one more battle to lose, while yet others see it as an apt response to Mount Rushmore and a way for the Sioux to reclaim the Black Hills. Two things about it that are certain: It's large, and you and I will be dead before it's completed.

Wind Cave National Park is at the Southern end of the Black Hills, covering an area of high, rolling prairie, where the grass was never tall like that on the Great Plains. Few attendees of the Sturgis rally make it this far south during the event, but those who do are rewarded by scenery that's unique in yet a different way from the uniqueness of places already described. The speed limit seems unreasonably low, but that's because there are buffalo on the highway.

Wind Cave itself is something to see. It's a network of miles of natural tunnels. The park offers a number of guided tours from which to choose. The cave was named for the remarkable breeze through its entryway, caused by a large volume of air exchanging through such a narrow opening due to the difference in temperature above and below ground, and the size of the cave.

Were there a western South Dakota community that I'd invest in, it'd be Hot Springs. From a quick ride through town, it appears to have more closed businesses than open ones. But as is often the case, that same lack of money is what has saved its history. Its main avenue has some of the best examples of western mountain 19th century stone architecture.

Strangely, Hot Springs, a town with a population of less than 4,000 and that's 70 miles from the nearest interstate or airport, is where the yearly Miss South Dakota pageant takes place.

East of the Black Hills and Rapid City are the Badlands, which are beautiful in their ugliness. Once a giant sea, followed by successive flood plains and riverbeds, it's now a site of active erosion of tens of millions of years of sediment. It's unfriendly

yet inspiring. The Badlands yield huge amounts of fossils, dating from about 30 to 70 million years ago, including little horses that one time grazed this continent.

Again, like so much of the region, the Badlands are unique in a way completely different from the rest of this region that's packed with unique geological treasures. Badlands can be accessed from a number of directions, but a ride through it from the southwest to the north provides the best tour. After traversing the White River Valley and Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, the loop of Route 240 to Wall gives a broad perspective of the Badlands from atop its northern ridge.

In all, western South Dakota is enthralling. Geologically, there's something unexpected and weird around every corner. Experiencing that for a few days can change you in the best way that travel can. It's a place where Planet Earth has been active and inventive. If you let yourself be consumed by its startling features, and feel its pulse, it becomes easy to understand why so much of it is sacred. It's a place of dynamics and drama. It's a place that cannot be truly experienced during the congested cacophony of celebrating bikers. It requires many stops, walks, quiet, and a full immersion to comprehend.

I've never been much for anthropomorphizing the natural world. What I've learned on this journey is to make an exception for that. For Native Americans, there's no other plausible way to experience or comprehend the earth we live on than to respect it as a living being. In western South Dakota, the Black Hills embrace you with their comforting scale. You can feel the earth breathing against you at Wind Cave—sometimes inhaling, sometimes exhaling. You can see the anger in the Badlands. You can touch the sky above the prairie at Bear Butte.

Added together, this region's diverse extremes work on you with their conflicting excitements. Like a beachhead against an ocean or a convergence of two powerful rivers, it's where air meets rock with drama. It's a place that moves men's hearts, just through the magic of its natural morphology. After a couple of days in the Black Hills, you can feel it inside you.

At dusk on one evening, we were trying to reach Hot Springs before twilight ended, concerned to be out among the buffalo while riding a motorcycle after dark. But despite that, and despite being tired, despite being exhausted from another day of intense experiences, I stopped on the roadside in the rolling hills of Wind Cave. I stopped because we'd found what the region is, and I had to let us pause again to let it envelop us in silence. The thunderhead of a hailstorm covered the eastern sky, pink at its top miles above where the sun was still shining. Breezes drove waves across the lush grasses. The red western sky colored the air in gold. Wild animals grazed in the distance. I wondered if maybe the point isn't to invest human qualities into nature but the other way around. **CW**

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Service

BY RAY NIERLICH

✱
The Triumph Tiger 800 is a solid all-rounder, but owner Al Carlstrom wants to know how he can get the odometer and tripmeter to tell him what he wants.

ODO CONTROLS

Q: I have a 2014 Triumph Tiger 800 “Roadie.” The odometer only displays for the first couple of seconds when I start the bike. Only a tripmeter is visible after that. After reading through the owner’s manual, there doesn’t seem to be a way to have the odometer displayed full time. A motorcycle engine can be re-mapped; can this display be “re-flashed” too?

AL CARLSTROM
NEW LONDON, PA

A: What is needed is a way to “re-flash” our pitiful analog brains. Digital dashes can be dumbfounding. I have been humbled by Triumph’s clock and odometer reset procedure. Here’s the procedure, straight from the owner’s manual: When the ignition is switched on, the odometer is displayed for three seconds then the last trip reset is displayed. With the ignition on and bike in neutral, press and release button “A” until “set up” is displayed. Press button “B” once then press and release button “A” again until odometer mileage is visible. Simple, huh? Good luck.

UPGRADE TO LEDS?

Q: I’m about halfway through a nuts-and-bolts restoration of a 1971 Honda SL350K1. I’m keeping as much of it as possible fully original stock, but I do have a couple areas I’d like to improve. The bike has minimal electronics: headlight, taillight, brake light, and horn. I would like to upgrade the headlight and taillight with LEDs while keeping the original headlight shell and lens and the original taillight lens. I’d also like to improve the original drum brakes. Besides new brake shoes, what can I do to improve their effectiveness without changing the hub to a disc brake? Finally, with the variety of batteries available that were not available in 1971, what battery could you recommend for long service? I’ve been a *Cycle World* subscriber for over 20 years—the magazine is excellent in every way.

MATT BERENS
WATERFORD, MI

A: Flattery will get you far with us, for we are a shallow lot. Search the catalogs for the LED lights that tickle your fancy. I’d send the front brake to Vintage Brake (209/533-4346) to have the shoes redone with street Ferodo linings and also to check/adjust for optimal operation in the drum. With a little subtle modification you should be able to fit either an AGM lead-acid or a lithium-ion battery. The AGM type is vastly superior in every way to your original lead-acid. No acid leaks, more power, and tons more longevity. A quick search showed a Yuasa YTZ7S (6AH, 4.6 pounds) or YTZ8V (7AH, 6 pounds) will fit easily. They are only 3/8 inches wider than your five-amp stocker and slightly smaller in the other dimensions.

If you want the most power in the smallest package and the lightest weight, go with a lithium type. The downside? Manufacturers recommend a special charger, and your wallet will be lightened. Shorai, for example, has three of what it refers to as Case Size 2 that will fit. The 7AH, 1.06-pound LFX07L2-BS12 goes for \$99.95. The highest output LFX14L2 is 14AH, 1.68 pounds. It costs \$159.95, and the accompanying charger is \$84.85.

FOUL PLAY

Q: I am having spark/timing issues with my 1996 Honda ST1100 (non-ABS) with 44,000 miles. I had a local shop perform a tune-up and they adjusted the valves, installed new intake boots and carb gaskets, and synchronized the carburetors. With the bike running well and about 100 miles on it since the tune-up, I took a 500-mile weekend trip, 300 miles on twisty, two-lane mountain roads, and 200 for the return trip home on the interstate at 70 to 80 mph. As soon as I arrived home, I found myself having trouble keeping the bike idling and it seemed to be running on three cylinders.

I pulled the spark plugs and found one to be carbon fouled. I replaced them to no avail. I then pulled the carbs and checked the floats and jet adjustments, loose screws, etc. but



BEST USED BIKES
MOTO GUZZI GRISO

YEARS SOLD: 2006–present

MSRP NEW: \$13,490 ('06) to \$12,990 ('15)

BLUE BOOK RETAIL VALUE:

\$5,280 ('06) to \$11,440 ('15)

BASIC SPECS: An air/oil-cooled, 1,064cc, longitudinally mounted, 90-degree V-twin powering the early Griso saw significant performance upgrades in 2009 with the introduction of the Griso 1200 8V and the current eight-valve 1,151cc engine. A centrally located chain-driven camshaft operates the valves via pushrods, while twin throttle bodies and Weber-Marelli electronic fuel injection meters air and fuel. The frame has 50mm tubular steel spars running from the steering head to the swingarm pivot plates, with the engine serving as a stressed member. The shaft drive features a proprietary full-floating crown-and-pinion unit that eliminates chassis jacking typical of shaft drive.

WHY IT'S DESIRABLE: As Guzzi's sport-naked, the Griso is crafted with a good dose of Italian flair. The engine produces robust torque in a throbbing way that is uniquely soothing to the senses. When the pace heats up, its sporting suspension, tires, and brakes allow full exploitation of the chassis and its excellent cornering clearance. On the highway, a rangy 60.9-inch wheelbase equates to a steadfast ride, one that's complemented by one of the most comfortable saddles on the road today. The Griso magically bridges the gap between sportbike and relaxed cruiser. If unique character drives your two-wheel passion, the Griso delivers. In spades.

THE COMPETITION: Ducati's Monster and Triumph's Speed Triple served as inspiration for the Griso. While the sport-naked category has seen a steady influx of high-tech models from several manufacturers, the Griso offers a refreshing nod to tradition.



GOT A MECHANICAL OR TECHNICAL PROBLEM with your beloved ride? Perhaps we can help. Contact us at cwservice@cycleworld.com with your questions. We cannot guarantee a reply to every inquiry.

found no problems and reinstalled. The bike now idles great, but a low-end hesitation exists. I put a timing light on it and checked each plug wire and found an intermittent "flutter" in place of a steady pulse from the timing light. So before I start replacing \$300 to \$600 worth of wires, coils, and the CDI unit as the local shops informed me to do, I was hoping you might have some insight.

STEVE GROVEN
NAMPA, ID

A: The ignition systems on these Hondas are very reliable. It is highly unlikely that the black box or pick-up has failed. First, with the bike idling, mist a little water on all the high-tension components (from coils to plugs) then look and listen for arcing. When you do this, the darker your garage, the better. Pay particular attention to arcing through the spark plug cap that had the fouled plug. Next check for a plugged pilot jet. I suspect

this is the problem, and it gets more common every day with modern fuel and older bikes. Varnish is tough to get out of the very tiny pilot jets. You also could have picked up a little dirt since the tune-up. Run a wee wire through the pilot jets. Some Hondas have two jets; be sure you get through both. Or, even better, replace them with new if you spot anything. Forget just spraying with carb cleaner; most won't even touch ethanol deposits.

HOT OIL

Q: I have a 2002 Triumph America with an air-cooled 790cc engine. I live in a desert community that has grown over the years. Now every time I take it out in the summer I have six to eight traffic lights to encounter. I worry about overheating my engine under these conditions. I have considered installing a cooling fan on its factory oil cooler. I would control it by a temperature switch on the oil line coming out of the cylinder head

before it enters the oil cooler. I would like to know your thoughts on this. I already have oil sump temperature and oil pressure gauges installed on this bike. I use the factory-recommended oil. I have seen oil temperatures around 220 degrees Fahrenheit on really hot days at a long traffic light.

JIM DESHON
HESPERIA, CA

A: Did you used to own a Trident back in the day? If not, why the paranoia with oil temps? You bought one of the simplest, most stone-reliable bikes, so why do you compulsively worry about oil temps? Oil temps of up to 250 degrees Fahrenheit or so are no big deal on a modern bike, especially when running synthetic oil, as the Triumphs do. If you must tinker, yes, by all means put a fan on the oil cooler, but you would be better served by binning the oil pressure and temp gauges and going on a long ride instead. I've heard Utah is very pretty riding. *CW*



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DIRT QUAKE

"If you're daft enough to race it,
we're dumb enough to let you."

By Gary Inman

D

irt Quake is nominally a British concept imported into the Pacific Northwest. The idea is to demystify dirt-track racing by opening it to all

comers while promoting the sport at every level and to a crowd it's not currently reaching.

The keystone of the event is the mantra: "If you're daft enough to race it, we're dumb enough to let you." The classes are aimed squarely at road-bikes. Racebikes and off-road bikes can compete at dozens of events, so they're pretty much excluded. The classes include: Inappropriate Road Bike, Chopper, Street Tracker, Lady, and Kitchen Sink, the last for square pegs that can't be hammered even into these slack class formats. Snowmobile, you say? Come along. We'll fit you in somewhere.

This is the second Dirt Quake to be promoted by the flat-track freaks at *Sideburn* magazine (of which I am one) and the Portland, Oregon-based moto-polymaths, See See Motorcycles. Both American Quakes have had Castle Rock's AMA-sanctioned national track in Washington as their epicenter. For the 2015 edition, competitors traveled from New York, Denver, Los Angeles, and Canada and mixed with a healthy crowd.

Saturday saw the local club, the Mount St. Helens MC, run its own flat-track program. Northwest hotshots, including Andrew Luker, Andy DiBrino, and national number 11 Scott Baker, competed against club racers of all ages and most abilities. A class of street trackers was added for the strong field of race-prepped Harley Sportsters, Street 750s, and Triumph Bonneville that had come for the next day's racing. Supported



riders from custom builders Roland Sands, The Speed Merchant, British Customs, Suicide Machine Company, and The Rusty Butcher battled on the 3/8-mile clay oval.

As soon as the racing finished after 11 p.m., 1,000 Hop Valley beers were handed out for free, and a punk cover band struck up in the open-air pits, forcing Dead Kennedys and Plastic Bertrand through an underpowered amp and overworked speakers. A mosh pit formed. A pull-start minibike appeared in the middle, somehow doing laps without hitting the slam-dancing crowd. Then a racing Harley Sportster appeared, desperate to do a burnout despite not having a front brake. The crowd helped him out.

When the band ran out of material, a local, whom everyone assumed was associated with the Mount St. Helens club (but had actually been disowned by them), rolled up in the water truck and started dousing down a minibike oval in the center of one of the campgrounds. The pit racing commenced after midnight. It morphed, seamlessly, into 450s





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ENTERTAINMENT:
While The Rusty Butcher flew, Evel, El Pollo Loco, and a wannabe Fonda patrolled.

JOSH KURPIUS



racing, then the Sportsters thundered up and promptly crashed out. A kicker ramp appeared, and dozens lied down to be jumped by a helmetless daredevil. Next—and I'm not making this up—a small pleasure cruiser boat magically materialized in the middle of the campsite.

When a Harley couldn't tow it (and its 10 onboard drunks), a Japanese pickup weighed in. Then things got really messy. Several stars of TV and movie franchise *Jackass* were in attendance, and even they were shaking their heads. It felt historical, in a very small way. Stuff was happening that was hilarious but should not be repeated. Misty-eyed old-timers compared it to wild 1970s Sturgis rallies. There was a feeling everyone just about got away with it. Blue flashing lights signaled bedtime for most. After all, it was race day when the sun came up.

After a slow start, mercifully slow for many, practice and racing got under way around 1 p.m. For such a cuckoo collection of amateur racers, raw novices, have-a-go heroes, and terminally



JOSH KURPIUS

befuddled, the racing ran like clockwork. There were two practice sessions, one heat and a main for each class. The racing was surprisingly fast. The Harley Invitational and Street Tracker mains saw 400-pound modified cruisers entering corners on full lock and with their inside, high-mounted footpegs dragging. Of course, there were racers so slow they couldn't catch a cold, but they were equally venerated.

The racing was paused for a dose of half-time entertainment. Racers, spectators, and anyone was invited to take part

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in a "style" contest, launching the wrong way over Castle Rock's famous TT jump. And the crowd was invited to line the jump. It was like poking a bear with a stick. Hadn't everyone pushed their luck enough? Clearly not. The winner was Mark Atkins, The Rusty Butcher, a social media sensation who jumps a Sportster

like it was a supercross bike. His was the highest and longest jump. His throttle stuck open, he split the sunburned crowd, and he ended up with the paramedics. At least he won some \$1,000 Fox shocks for his roadbike.

Then it was time for the mains. In the Inappropriate Roadbike class, the leader slid off and was

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JOSH KURPIUS

run over by a KTM 1190 Adventure ridden by a man dressed as a chicken. The chicken stayed on; the faller limped away. Other stuff happened, and it didn't stop for 24 hours. If it was not a naked man riding a bike the length of a Cadillac, it was one of the SoCal Sportster crew riding through

town with a topless trophy girl sitting backward on the tank.

No one really cares who won or lost. The majority of the racers experienced their first-ever motorcycle race as a competitor—something they're not going to forget. We know for a fact that people who have lost their com-

petition virginity at a Dirt Quake have gone on to buy real race-bikes and compete in flat track, bringing new blood into the sport. After all, every sport needs new people at the grassroots level, even if they come through a backdoor that they kicked in and tossed on a campfire. **CW**



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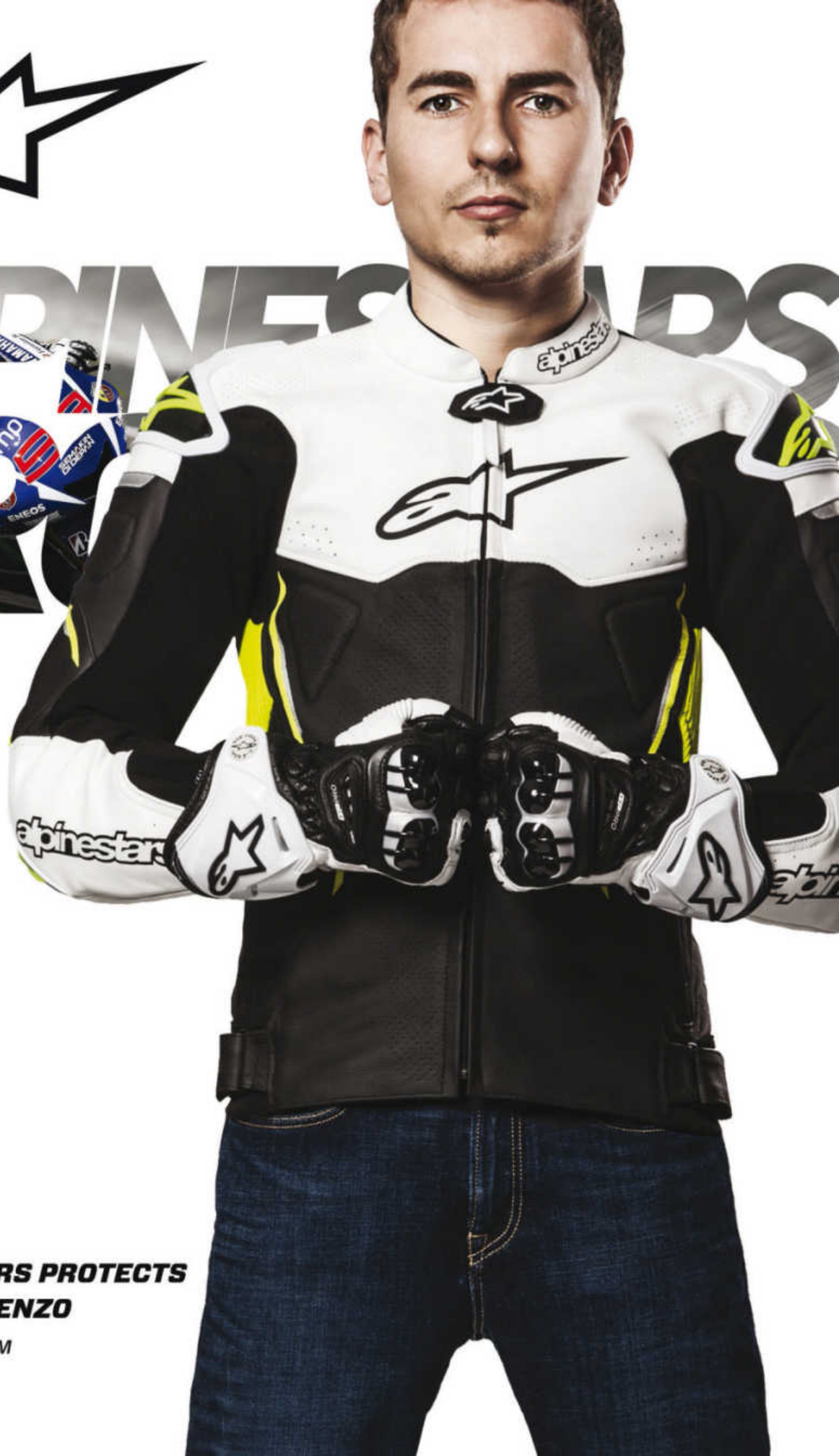
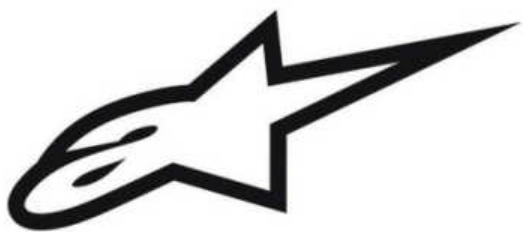
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Photographer: Frank Hoppen

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